Josh: Bell 1802

DISCOURSES

RELATING TO

THE EVIDENCES

OF

REVEALED RELIGION.

VOL. I.

DELIVERED AT HACKNEY IN 1793, 1794,

BY

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL. D. F. R. S. &c.

That thou mighteſt know the certainty of theſe things wherein thou haſt been inſtructed. ACTS i. 4.

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1794.



REVEALED RELIGION

AS

THE FOUNDATION

OF

DISCOURSES

DEDICATION.

TO

The Rev. THOMAS BELSHAM,

TUTOR IN DIVINITY IN THE NEW COLLEGE, HACKNEY.

DEAR SIR,

AFFECTION and eſteem join with a ſenſe of propriety in leading me to dedicate this work to you. To your friendſhip and ſociety I owe a very great part of the ſatisfaction I have enjoyed during my reſidence at Clapton; not many days having ever intervened without our having had ſome intercourſe, ſince I have been ſettled in your neighbourhood; and the interruption of it, as the breaking of any other habit, will for a long time be ſenſibly and painfully felt by me. It has alſo been an intercourſe as improving as it has been pleaſing to me. And without the ſeaſonable aid of impreſſions from the knowledge and virtue of others, no man can tell how much his own mind might have ſuffered; man being the great inſtrument in the hand of Providence of forming men for the beſt or the worſt purpoſes.

But what, I hope, attaches me to you more than any thing of this nature, are the important ſervices you are daily rendering to the great cauſe which we have both at heart, viz. the training up of youth in the principles of liberal and uſeful knowledge, and eſpecially of rational Chriſtianity and virtue. The immediate object of theſe *Diſcourſes* is one to which you have long given the greateſt attention. No perſon educated under you can be ignorant either of what Chriſtianity really is, or of the rational evidence on which its truth is founded; and the effect of your judicious labours is very conſpicuous.

I have no where known, or heard of, ſuch ſtudious and orderly young men as thoſe of the New College at Hackney, and to this your immediate inſpection, as the reſident tutor, and your judicious treatment, have eminently contributed. Nor have the rational Diſſenters ever had miniſters who, by their ability and zeal, promiſe to diſtinguiſh themſelves more by their labours for the good of mankind than thoſe who have been trained by you. To them, as I am going off the ſtage, I ſhall principally look for that rechriſtianizing of the world which is now become abſolutely neceſſary, if Chriſtianity is to ſubſiſt at all.

The wretched forms under which Chriſtianity has long been generally exhibited, and its degrading

grading alliance with, or rather its ſubjection, to a power wholly heterogeneous to it, and which has employed it for the moſt unworthy purpoſes, has made it appear contemptible and odious in the eyes of all ſenſible men, who are now every where caſting off the very profeſſion, and every badge, of it. Enlightened Chriſtians muſt themſelves, in ſome meaſure, join with unbelievers, in expoſing whatever will not bear examination in or about religion. But when it ſhall, by this means, be diveſted of all its foreign incumbrances, it will be found to be ſomething on which neither their arguments, nor their ridicule, will have any effect. It is a farther ſatisfaction to me to reflect, that you and I not only agree in entertaining the ſame views of this ſubject, but that from a ſimilar unfavourable outſet, we have both gradually, and by ſimilar means, been led to entertain them.

I think myſelf peculiarly happy in leaving my congregation, and eſpecially my claſſes of young perſons, under your care, as I know no perſon whoſe views in theſe reſpects coincide ſo exactly with my own. As far as they have been ſatisfied with me, I am confident they will be with you; and candour and goodwill in the hearers is a ſure earneſt of their improvement under any teacher. Happy ſhall I think myſelf if, in any future deſtination, I can find, or form, a ſphere of exertion

of a ſimilar kind; that I may be in America, what I ſhall leave you here; that we may communicate our reſpective plans for the improvement of ourſelves, and the inſtruction of others, in whatever is moſt intereſting to man; and that, by the diſcipline and experience that we acquire here, we may be prepared for a ſphere of ſuperior uſefulneſs, and what will ſurely accompany it, ſuperior happineſs, in a better ſtate.

With the greateſt affection and eſteem, I am,

Dear Sir,

Yours ſincerely,

J. PRIESTLEY.

CLAPTON, *March* 1794.

PREFACE.

THE ſubject of theſe diſcourſes is one on which I have addreſſed the public ſeveral times before, as in my *Inſtitutes of Natural and Revealed Religion*. ſeveral parts of my *Hiſtory of the Chriſtian Church*, my *Letters to a Philoſophical Unbeliever*, thoſe to *the Philoſophers and Politicians of France*, and thoſe *to the Jews*; beſides the firſt part of the *Concluſion* of my *Hiſtory of the Corruptions of Chriſtianity*, addreſſed to Mr. Gibbon, my *Diſcourſe on the Reſurrection of Jeſus*, and the large *Preface* to my Philoſophical Works in three volumes. But the ſubject being of the greateſt importance, and eſpecially at this time, I have thought it not ſuperfluous to compoſe, and publiſh, theſe *Diſcourſes*, intended more particularly to illuſtrate the evidence ariſing from the *miracles* that have been wrought in favour of the divine miſſion of Moſes and of Chriſt; ſo that, though my object be ultimately the ſame, the ground that I have taken is conſiderably different from any that I have been upon before.

The late revolution in France, attended with the complete overthrow of the civil eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity, and the avowed rejection of all revealed religion, by many perſons of the firſt character in that country, and by great numbers alſo in this, calls the attention of perſons of reflection in a very forcible manner to the ſubject. It now more than ever behoves all the friends of religion to ſhew that they are not chargeable with a blind *implicit faith*, believing what their fathers, mothers, or nurſes, believed before them, merely becauſe they believed it; but that their faith is the offſpring of reaſon: that Chriſtianity is no *cunningly deviſed fable*, but that the evidence of the facts on which it is built is the ſame with that of any other facts of antient date; ſo that we muſt abandon all faith in hiſtory, and all human teſtimony, before we can diſbelieve them.

The great problem to be ſolved is, how to account for preſent appearances, and ſuch facts in antient hiſtory as no perſon ever did, or can deny, viz. the actual exiſtence of Chriſtianity, and the ſtate of it in the age immediately following that of Chriſt and the apoſtles. Unbelievers muſt think that they can account for the facts without admitting the truth of the goſpel hiſtory. On the other hand, the Chriſtian ſays that, if this hiſtory be not admitted, the well known ſtate of things in

the age immediately ſucceeding muſt imply more miracles, and thoſe without any rational object, than that hiſtory ſuppoſes. The like, he ſays, muſt be the caſe with reſpect to the hiſtory of the Jews in the Old Teſtament. If the Moſaic hiſtory be admitted, that of the Jews in that age, and from that time to the preſent, is natural; but on any other ſuppoſition moſt unaccountable; that whole nation thinking and acting as no human beings ever did, or poſſibly could, think and act. Whereas, it muſt be taken for granted, that the Jews are, and ever have been, *men*, as well as ourſelves. This is the ſtate of the argument between believers and unbelievers in revelation, that I have frequently held out, and no perſon can ſay that it is an unfair one. Leaſt of all it is ſuch as as a man who wiſhes to be governed by *reaſon*, and who would account for all appearances in the moſt natural manner, can object to.

The preſent times are, no doubt, exceedingly critical with reſpect to Chriſtianity; and being fully perſuaded of its truth, I rejoice that they are ſo. Whatever will not bear the teſt of the moſt rigorous ſcrutiny muſt now be rejected; the great ſupports of ſuperſtition and impoſture, viz. human authority, power and emolument, being now, in a great meaſure, withdrawn. This will be the means of purging our religion from every thing that will

not

not bear this rigorous examination; but it will contribute to the firmer eſtabliſhment of every thing that *will* bear it. And what can we wiſh for more? It ought not to be any man's intereſt to maintain an error, and to take an idle tale for undoubted fact. But if revealed revelation be true, if Moſes was commiſſioned to teach the unity of God, and the purity of his worſhip; and if Jeſus Chriſt was commiſſioned to confirm the ſame, and to announce to mankind the ſtill more intereſting doctrine of the reſurrection of the dead, and a future ſtate of righteous retribution, it is of infinite conſequence that all men ſhould be apprized of it; ſince their conduct here, and their expectations hereafter, are nearly concerned in it. Compared with truths ſo momentous as theſe, all other knowledge is a trifle.

It is no ſmall ſatisfaction to Chriſtians, that even the preſent prevalence of infidelity, as well as the univerſal ſpread, and final eſtabliſhment, of Chriſtianity, were foretold by Chriſt. And as he ſpake of this infidelity as one of the ſigns of his approaching coming, we may be looking forward with confidence and joy to that glorious event; after which the belief of Chriſtianity, together with the reign of virtue, and of peace, will be univerſal. This will be that *kingdom of God*, or *of heaven*, which is the conſummation to which we ſhould be devoutly looking,

looking, and which, by our Saviour's direction, is the ſubject of our daily prayers, when *nation ſhall no more lift up ſword againſt nation, and when they ſhall learn war no more.* For an account of other ſigns of the approach of this great cataſtrophe, I refer to my *Faſt Sermon* of this year. The preſent times are uncommonly eventful. I expect that they will be exceedingly calamitous; but that the final iſſue will be moſt glorious.

As my *Diſcourſe on the Reſurrection of Jeſus*, and alſo that which exhibits *a view of revealed religion*, preached at the ordination of Mr. Field, when Mr. Belſham gave the charge, printed along with it, fall within the plan of theſe Diſcourſes (the latter making a proper concluſion to them) I have made them part of this courſe; and as I ſhall no more publiſh them ſeparately, and wiſh to preſerve the *Prefaces*, and the *Addreſs to the Jews* prefixed to the former, I ſhall give them in an Appendix.

Alſo, at the requeſt of ſome friends, for whoſe advice I have the greateſt deference, I ſubjoin a copy of my *Correſpondence with Mr. Gibbon*, occaſioned by my preſenting him with a copy of my *Hiſtory of the Corruptions of Chriſtianity*. It will appear that I always thought myſelf at liberty to do this. But he being now dead, and there being

being no perſon who can be offended at it, every ſhadow of objection to the publication is removed.

I conſidered Mr. Gibbon as better qualified to diſcuſs the evidences of Chriſtianity than any other unbeliever in this country, and probably in any other; and his plan of attack being on the ground of *hiſtory*, and *human nature*, was the faireſt of any; ſo that the diſcuſſion to which it would have led ſeemed well calculated to overturn the ſcheme if it was not well founded, or to eſtabliſh it if it was. I therefore regret that he did not comply with my invitation, to which his writings gave the faireſt occaſion. The intereſt of important truth would, no doubt, have been promoted by it. As to Mr. Gibbon's motives for declining the diſcuſſion (which on my part would have been very diſpaſſionate) and the temper with which the letters are written, every perſon will form his own judgment.

In the Preface to my *Letters to a Philoſophical Unbeliever*, in which I replied to *Mr. Hume's Poſthumous Dialogues*, I gave Dr. Adam Smith, with whom I had ſome acquaintaince, a hint that I had no objection to diſcuſs with him the Atheiſtical principles of his deceaſed friend. But he took no notice of it. No friend of religion, I truſt, will ever decline the defence of his principles,

ciples, but, as the apoſtle Peter exhorts, be always *ready to give a reaſon for the hope that is in him.* And in the preſent ſtate of things, it is of particular importance that young perſons be carefully inſtructed in the grounds and principles of their religion, that they may be qualified both to give a good account of them for themſelves, and be able to inſtruct others.

ERRATA.

Page 370, line 12. Inſtead of *men to God*, read *God to men.*

To the Correſpondence with Mr. Gibbon annex the following dates:

Mr. Gibbon's firſt Letter; *Bentinck-ſtreet, Jan.* 28, 1783. To the Anſwer; *Feb.* 3, 1783.

To Mr. Gibbon's ſecond Letter; *Feb.* 6, 1783. To the Anſwer; *Feb.* 10, 1783.

To Mr. Gibbon's third Letter; *Feb.* 22, 1783. To the Anſwer; *Feb.* 25, 1783.



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DIS-

DISCOURSES

ON THE

EVIDENCE OF DIVINE REVELATION.

DISCOURSE I.

The Importance of Religion to enlarge the Mind of Man.

Every man who hath this hope in him purifieth himſelf, even as he is pure.

1 JOHN, iii. 3.

IT is acknowledged that man is ſuperior to brute creatures, and that this ſuperiority conſiſts in his capacity of being much happier in himſelf, and in his power of contributing in a more eminent degree to the happineſs of others; by which means he makes nearer approaches to his Maker, who is ſupremely benevolent, and ſuperlatively happy.

It is alſo well known, that this ſuperiority in man, with reſpect to his power of

enjoying and communicating happineſs, depends upon the ſuperiority of his mental faculties, by which he is capable of greater comprehenſion of mind, of taking into his view more of the paſt and of the future along with the preſent; ſo that his ideas are more complex, and farther removed from mere ſenſible objects. In conſequence of this, the happineſs of man does not depend upon his preſent ſenſations, but is of more ſtable nature; and his reſolutions and actions do not depend upon variable circumſtances, but he can purſue an uniform plan of conduct, without being diverted from it by the events of the hour, or of the day.

This ſuperior comprehenſion of mind cannot, however, in the nature of things, be attained by man without a ſtate of progreſſive improvement, beginning with the condition of a brute animal, merely impreſſed by ſenſible objects, and impelled to action by thoſe impreſſions, as children are; becauſe theſe impreſſions are the elements of all our knowledge, and of all our powers in future life; and there is no true wiſdom

in

in any attempts to accelerate this progreſs beyond a certain term. For what would a greater comprehenſion of mind, and a greater power of combining ideas, avail us, without a ſtock of ideas to combine and comprehend? It is well known, that if we expect that boys ſhould ever make valuable men, they muſt continue ſome time in the ſtate of boys, or they will never make men worth forming. In the very warmth and impetuoſity, and conſequently the occaſional irregularities, of youth, we often perceive the germ of the moſt excellent characters. But then theſe irregularities of youth, by which their minds are ſtored with a ſufficient variety of ſtrong impreſſions, muſt not be continued beyond the ſeaſon of youth, or that ſtate of peculiar ſenſibility, in which ſomething ſtill more new ſhall be able, in a great meaſure, to leſſen the effect of preceding impreſſions, otherwiſe habits will be formed which will preclude all farther progreſs. In a courſe of time the mind acquires an inſenſibility to new impreſſions. A man is then in a manner incapable of extending his views,

and thereby he loſes the great privilege of his rational nature. His mind, for want of an acceſſion of new ideas, or farther knowledge, may even contract, and he may ſink into a ſtate approaching that of a brute animal, and one that is old and intractable.

This, however, I obſerve by the way, though I ſhall have ſome farther uſe for the obſervation hereafter; my object being to ſhew, that for the very ſame reaſon that a man excels other animals, a believer in divine revelation, and eſpecially a Chriſtian, is ſuperior to other men; his comprehenſion of mind being enlarged by ſuch knowledge as revelation brings him acquainted with, ſo that he is capable of being much more happy in himſelf, and of a more generous ardour in promoting the happineſs of others. Alſo, being leſs ſenſible to preſent impreſſions, he will be more drawn out of himſelf, and be more free from that anxiety and diſtreſs to which perſons who attend to themſelves only are neceſſarily ſubject.

It may not be improper to conſider as the firſt great article of revealed religion, be-

cauſe

cauſe it is by this means more ſtrongly impreſſed upon the mind, though it is alſo the dictate of nature, to be the doctrine of the being of a God. It ſo much ſtands or falls with the belief of revelation, that at preſent they generally go together, and they who are unbelievers in revealed religion, though they may retain the belief of a God, have little motive to *attend* to the ſubject, ſo that they are generally practical, though not abſolutely ſpeculative atheiſts.

Now the belief, the habitual and practical belief, of the being of God, a Being infinitely wiſe, powerful, and good, the author of univerſal nature, and the doctrine of a Providence, which is connected with it, contributes greatly to the enlargement of the mind of man, extending our views beyond what we immediately ſee and hear around us. Without this man is comparatively a Being of narrow views, but little advanced beyond the brutes, and has but little motive to attend to any thing beyond himſelf, and the loweſt gratifications. Without this faith he muſt be liable to be

diſturbed and unhinged by every croſs event.

But the belief of a God, and of a Providence, of a Being who created all things, who has aſſigned to every creature his proper ſtation, and who ſuperintends the whole chain of events, relieves and enlarges the mind, and alſo gives us a lively intereſt in the concerns of others. The idea of a God is that of the father of all his creatures, and eſpecially of all mankind; and this ſuggeſts the farther idea, that all men are brethren, the children of one common parent; and with this idea are intimately connected a thouſand other pleaſing ideas, and eſpecially a ſenſe of a common intereſt, and an obligation to promote it by every means in our power. With this favourable impreſſion, we are prepared to reſpect, and to love, all mankind, as brethren, and to bear with one another as ſuch. Whereas, without this idea, we feel as ſo many unconnected individuals, turned adrift upon the wide world, where we muſt each of us ſcramble for ourſelves as well as we can,

can, and ſhall ſeldom think of attending to others, any farther than a regard to our own intereſt may make it expedient.

Thus, by means of faith in the being and providence of God, we are nobly carried out of, and beyond, ourſelves, and are led to conceive a generous regard for others; and by this we loſe nothing but a mean ſelfiſhneſs, and with it a tormenting anxiety, which is at the ſame time the characteriſtic, and the puniſhment, of a narrow, contracted mind.

There is no true, well-founded patriotiſm that has any other foundation than this. Without this there will always be room for ſuſpicion and diſtruſt, a ſuſpicion of private and ſelfiſh views, ſuited to a mind deſtitute of this great and enlarged principle, of all mankind conſtituting one family, under one great head; the idea of an univerſal parent, who regards us all as his children, and who requires that we regard each other in the ſame pleaſing light.

Without faith in God, and a belief of his univerſal benevolent providence, men muſt be liable to be peculiarly diſtreſſed and diſ-

concerted at ſuch calamitous events as we are daily ſubject to. They are evils in themſelves, and we do not know to what farther evils they may lead. Even the good that we ſee is uncertain, and unſtable, and for any thing that we know, may terminate in evil, which it will thereby only ſerve to aggravate. In this ſtate of mind all is darkneſs and confuſion, anxiety and dread.

But the moment that we begin to conſider the world not as a fatherleſs world, but that there is a principle of wiſdom and goodneſs preſiding over all, and believe that nothing can come to paſs without the knowledge and intention of this infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, the gloom vaniſhes, and day-light burſts upon us. For though we be ſtill at a loſs to account for particular events, and do not diſtinctly ſee their tendency to good, our firm perſuaſion that good *is* intended, and will be the reſult of the whole ſcheme, is not at all ſhaken; and then nothing will remain but a pleaſing curioſity with reſpect to the manner in which the good will be produced. In the midſt

midſt of calamity we can, with this perſuaſion, live a life of faith, and of joy. With the devout pſalmiſt, we can ſay, *The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice. For though clouds and darkneſs are round about him, righteouſneſs and judgment are the foundation of his throne.*

Thus does the belief of a God and a providence contribute to make a man a much greater and happier being than he otherwiſe could be. It enlarges his view of the ſyſtem of nature, of which he is a part. It diſcovers to him his connexion with, and his intereſt in, other. beings, and other things. It leads him to look backward to the origin of things, and forward to the termination of the great drama, and to believe that it will be moſt glorious and happy.

This end will be much farther promoted by the great doctrine of revelation, that this life is not the whole of our exiſtence, that it is only a ſtate of probation and diſcipline, calculated to train us up for a future and more glorious ſtate after death. How different, and how ſuperior, a Being muſt this view, properly impreſſed upon the mind, make

make a man. It is a difference not eaſy to deſcribe, but it may be felt. A Being of a day will have his views, thoughts, and ſchemes, adapted to a day. To-morrow cannot intereſt him, becauſe he has no intereſt in it. If he like the ſcenes of the day, to which his exiſtence is confined, his heart muſt ſicken at the idea of any thing beyond it, becauſe he is totally excluded from it.

What then muſt be the feelings of the man who truly and habitually believes that he is born for eternity; that years and ages bear no ſenſible proportion to the term of his exiſtence; that the duration of the ſun, moon, and ſtars, is no more than a period that divides his exiſtence, and aſſiſts him in meaſuring it; that when they ſhall be no more, he only, as it were, begins to be, and that other ſuns and other worlds will be equally ſhort lived with reſpect to him. How ſublime, and how animating, is the thought. Can any thing mean and ſordid occupy the breaſt of a being who is perſuaded of this grand deſtination? Will he not overlook every thing temporary, and

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be ever ſtretching his thoughts to things eternal, in which his intereſt is infinitely greater than in any thing here?

We think highly, and juſtly ſo, of the advantage which an acquaintance with hiſtory gives a man over one who has no knowledge of any events beſides thoſe of his own times. We are highly gratified in being made acquainted with the origin, and early hiſtory, of the country in which we were born, and of the nation to which we belong. We are ſenſible that *travelling*, and ſeeing other countries, and other cuſtoms, than our own, improves and enlarges the mind. It adds to our ſtock of ideas, and gives us a greater field for contemplation. It is thereby the means of removing local prejudices, and of leſſening the influence of all ideas connected with that of ſelf.

What, then, muſt it be to be enabled, by the help of revelation, to look ſo far back as to the origin of the world, to range through all the ſucceſſive diſpenſations of God to man, to contemplate more eſpecially the promulgation of the goſpel, and to look forward to that glorious ſtate of things which is to take

place

place in conſequence of its univerſal ſpread; to look farther ſtill to the reſurrection of the dead, and the day of final judgment, followed by a never-ending eternity?

What a fund of great thoughts do theſe great ſubjects ſupply, and how ſcanty muſt be the furniture of that man's mind, let him be a philoſopher, an hiſtorian, a ſtateſman, or whatever elſe the world can make him, or he can make himſelf, compared with that of the meaneſt Chriſtian, to whom theſe great and extenſive views of things are familiar.

The contemplation of ſuch objects as theſe is ſufficient to raiſe a man above the world, and all the little purſuits and gratifications of it. Will ſuch a man as this beſtow much thought on the indulgence of his appetites and paſſions? Will he envy any man the enjoyment of any thing that this world can give him? or will he have a wiſh to aggrandize himſelf, or his family, in it?

He will, on the contrary, be rather apt to deſpiſe it too much, ſo as to attend too little to his proper duty in it, ſo engroſſed

will

will his mind be with things of infinitely greater magnitude and importance. This would unavoidably be the caſe, were it not that things *temporal*, though of little moment in themſelves, have the advantage of being preſent; whereas things *eternal*, though infinitely momentous, are diſtant. But, my brethren, faith can bring them near, and give them an influence as if they were preſent. *Faith*, as the apoſtle ſays, *is the ſubſtance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things unſeen.*

If theſe be the true ſources of that comprehenſion of mind which gives one man a ſuperiority over another; if, as is commonly, and juſtly, ſaid, it be *great thoughts* that *make great minds*, little cauſe has the poor Chriſtian to envy even the moſt enlightened, and ſtill leſs ſcholars in general who are not Chriſtians. The ſtudy of the ſcriptures alone contributes ſo much to this great end, that all that learning can do more is a mere trifle, and without it infinitely little. The beſt-informed unbeliever has but a ſcanty furniture of mind, few elements, as we may ſay, of greatneſs, dignity,

dignity, and happineſs, compared with the moſt unlearned Chriſtian; and with reſpect to proper intellectual improvement, ought to rank far below him. He has comparatively, though more in number, yet much ſmaller objects to contemplate; and what is of more conſequence, he is much more in danger of giving into low purſuits and gratifications, which debaſe the nature of man, and render him of little value in ſociety.

All the greater virtues, ſuch as patience in ſuffering, forgiveneſs of injuries, general benevolence, and habitual devotion, imply great comprehenſion of mind, or an union of more ideas and impreſſions than the preſent moment would furniſh; but with them the mind of a Chriſtian is already furniſhed, and therefore thoſe ſublime virtues are eaſily acquired by a Chriſtian, and not eaſily, if at all, by thoſe who are not Chriſtians.

We all begin our career in intellectual life with mere ſelfiſhneſs, attending to impreſſions made upon us by means of the external ſenſes; for we have no other inlets of ideas or knowledge. Of courſe, we are

for

for ſome time wholly occupied about ourſelves, and do not learn to look beyond ourſelves, and to feel for others, but in conſequence of experience, aided by reflection, which joins diſtant ideas to thoſe that are preſent. And no reflection is of ſo much uſe in carrying us beyond ourſelves, and inſpiring benevolence for others, as that of all mankind having one common parent, of our being training by him in the ſame ſchool of diſcipline here, and our being heirs of the ſame hope of immortal life hereafter. For want of theſe great views, unbelievers cannot ſo eaſily look beyond themſelves, and intereſt themſelves for others.

With reſpect to patience and forbearance, they are virtues that can only riſe out of reflection; for the preſſure of pain, and evils of any kind, naturally makes men impatient, wiſhing and endeavouring to procure immediate relief. It is thinking, and taking diſtant views of things, that make men patient, and we are beſt enabled to bear preſent evils by means of a firm belief

lief in the juſtice and goodneſs of that Being from whom we believe they come. But a perſon who never looks to this *firſt cauſe*, will naturally indulge to fretfulneſs, impatience, and reſentment, againſt *ſecond cauſes*, the immediate occaſion of his ſufferings; which a Chriſtian conſiders as the mere inſtruments in the hand of another, and that the moſt benevolent of all Beings.

The firſt feeling of injury prompts to reſentment and malice. But when a man can look beyond the firſt impreſſion, the immediate occaſion and inſtrument of the evils he experiences; when he thinks how little it is in the power of any perſon to injure him, that whatever is done to him is by the permiſſion of God, who has the beſt intentions in permitting and appointing every thing, he attends ſo little to *ſecond cauſes*, as to feel no reſentment at all. Like David, with reſpect to Shimei, he can ſay, *Let him curſe, ſince God hath bidden him curſe*; and like our Saviour he can ſay, with reſpect to all his enemies, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

Thus

Thus in ſuppreſſing reſentment and forgiving injuries there is true greatneſs of mind, and in revenge real littleneſs.

That greateſt of all virtues, and the immediate parent of ſeveral others, *habitual devotion*, naturally ariſes from conſidering the Supreme Being as the proper cauſe of all events, and at the ſame time as our proper parent, benefactor, moral governor, and final judge. This faith will inſpire the mind with the greateſt reverence for God, with reſpect for his authority, and intire confidence in the diſpenſations of his providence. With this faith we ſhall live as conſtantly *ſeeing*, and having intercourſe with, *him that is inviſible*; and a more elevated, dignified, and happy ſtate of mind cannot be conceived.

But the man who either believes that there is no God, or who lives without him in the world, wholly thoughtleſs of his being, his perfection, and his providence, cannot attain to this elevation, and ſerene happineſs. His views are bounded by the creature, and he never looks up to the Creator. If he have any remains of pious

ſentiments from early impreſſions not altogether effaced, the idea of God will even give him pain and diſpleaſure. He will profane his name in oaths and execrations, and make a mock of things the moſt ſacred; a ſure mark of a low, as well as of a depraved mind.

With the rejection of Chriſtianity an attentive obſerver will always find the loſs, or diminution, of theſe more ſublime virtues. For they neceſſarily depend upon a regard to providence, and a future ſtate; and it is generally attended with an evident debaſement of character, by ſinking into low vices, debauchery, and profaneneſs; or if external virtue be preſerved from habit, and ſome of the greater kinds, as public ſpirit, and generoſity, be cheriſhed, it is from ſuch principles as cannot be depended upon with reſpect to the bulk of mankind, viz. an enlightened ſelfiſhneſs, and a regard to poſthumous fame; and theſe will operate more upon great occaſions, than in the uniform tenor of peaceful life.

To the ſublime conſolations of religion, which are moſt wanted in the evening of life,

life, unbelievers muſt neceſſarily be ſtrangers. And if there be a happy ſeaſon for man in this life, it is that which is enjoyed towards the cloſe of it; when the labours of life are nearly over, when the dangers of virtue are paſſed, and a calm retroſpect can be taken of the courſe of divine providence reſpecting ourſelves, our deareſt intereſts, and the world, from an unſhaken faith in a righteous and benevolent Governor of the univerſe; and when a joyful proſpect of immortality can be indulged without allay. In this ſtate of mind the proſpect of death itſelf is pleaſing. Having ſeen, and enjoyed, enough of this life, a good man looks forward with pleaſing expectation towards another, ſinging the Chriſtian's triumphant ſong, *O Death where is thy ſting, O Grave where is thy victory.*

I ſhall now conclude with a few reflections.

1. As true dignity and comprehenſion of mind cannot be attained without a previous progreſſive ſtate, beginning with the moſt limited views, ſo it may have been neceſſary, that the world itſelf, including

the human ſpecies, as a part of it, ſhould go through a previous imperfect ſtate before it arrive at that happy one, in which, from the prophecies of ſcripture, we are led to expect, that it will terminate it; and that, in a way which we may not be able diſtinctly to ſee at preſent, it may contribute, and be really neceſſary, to that glorious cataſtrophe.

The world has indeed continued in a comparatively low and wretched ſtate, full of vice and miſery, men having, by their ambition and other ungoverned paſſions, been the cauſe of much evil, inſtead of happineſs, to each other, for many ages. But long as the period appears, it may be no more with reſpect to the duration of the world, than infancy, or childhood, is to the age of man. And hereafter the wiſdom and goodneſs of God may be as eaſily vindicated with reſpect to the one, as it is with reſpect to the other. Let us apply the ſame obſervation to the corruptions of true religion. They may hereafter appear to have been equally neceſſary to the perfect underſtanding, to the firm eſtabliſhment,

and

and conſequently to the happy effects of it, in future time.

2. Let us all, ſenſible of the great importance of true religion, do every thing in our power to extend the knowledge and the influence of it wherever we have opportunity. To this end let us labour to get juſt views of it ourſelves, in order that we may give a juſt repreſentation of it to others. And the true doctrine of the ſcriptures concerning the unity of God, and the placability of his nature, are in themſelves infinitely more agreeable to reaſon, than the doctrines of a multiplicity of Gods, or which comes to the ſame thing, of different perſons in the godhead, and of his implacability to repenting ſinners, without an adequate ſatisfaction and atonement, and they have a much more pleaſing and happy effect upon the mind that contemplates them.

If the purſuit of revenge imply a littleneſs in the mind of a *man* who gives way to it, it muſt give us a like low and degrading idea of *God*, and conſequently tend to give the ſame turn to his worſhippers, and imitators. And if the belief of a multipli-

city of deities (all of whom are, of courſe, ſuppoſed neceſſary to the work of creation and providence) imply imperfection in them all, it muſt proportionably leſſen our reverence, and debaſe our devotion.

On the contrary, nothing can be more ſublime in itſelf, or tend more to elevate the mind that contemplates it, than the idea of one great Being, one all-comprehenſive mind, equal to the whole work of creation and providence. By the utmoſt efforts of our minds we cannot attain to more than a very imperfect idea of ſuch a Being as this. But the very attempt to contemplate it fills the mind with the deepeſt reverence, and the moſt joyful confidence, and likewiſe tends to engage our obedience to his will. Alſo in the habitual endeavour to reſemble the great object of our worſhip, we ſhall ſtudy *to purify ourſelves, even as he is pure.*

Laſtly, If we would derive real advantage from Chriſtianity ourſelves, and recommend it to others, we muſt give due and habitual attention to the great principles of it. We muſt, with the pſalmiſt, meditate

meditate on theſe things day and night, and thereby make them familiar to our minds. We muſt not only know, but be intimately converſant with, the ſcriptures, which are the only records of this great revelation, and feel an increaſing ſatisfaction in reading and meditating on their important contents. Otherwiſe, we ſhall be Chriſtians in *name* only, and mere men of the world in reality.

It is not what we think of only occaſionally, but what habitually occupies our thoughts, that forms the mind, and the character; and this will be diſcovered by the mind involuntarily reverting to it, and taking pleaſure to dwell upon it. Is the man of buſineſs, or the man of ſcience, formed without much attention to his object, and taking pleaſure in it? You know the contrary. Expect not then to become Chriſtians in any other way. You muſt prize your religion above every thing elſe, and be ready to ſacrifice every thing elſe to it. It is only when we thus make religion our principal object, that the goſpel will teach, and enable, us to *deny all ungodlineſs*

and worldly luſts, and to live righteouſly, ſoberly, and piouſly, in this preſent world, ſo as to encourage us to look forwards to that *bleſſed hope, even the glorious appearance of the great God, and of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt,* in that great and triumphant day, when *corruption ſhall put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality.*

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE II.

Revelation the only Remedy for Idolatry and Superſtition.

The time of their ignorance God winked at.

ACTS, xvii. 30.

THE ſufficiency of reaſon, or the light of nature, for the diſcovery of all uſeful truth, has been the great boaſt of unbelievers in divine revelation. But this idea has been the offspring of a conceit of the powers of the human intellect, in conſequence of knowledge acquired in an advanced period of the world, without conſidering by how ſlow degrees that knowledge was attained, and eſpecially how much of it was, in reality, derived from that very revelation which they conſider as unneceſſary.

Without poſitive inſtruction, mankind, in the earlieſt ages, muſt have been entirely ignorant of every thing on which their exiſtence

iſtence and happineſs moſt depended. Seeing nothing but *effects*, and unable to trace their true *cauſes*, they muſt have wandered in a boundleſs field of conjecture, of which we ſee the mind of man to be always exceedingly fertile. Soon finding that there is no effect without ſome adequate cauſe, men, who have naturally but little patience of inveſtigation (for it is only experience that teaches this) preſently imagine ſomething or other to be the cauſe of every thing that they obſerve, and they acquieſce in this ſuppoſed cauſe till farther obſervation ſhall convince them of their miſtake. But what is moſt to be regretted, is, that an opinion of this kind once entertained, eſpecially when it has been recommended by a derivation from remote antiquity, does not eaſily give way to better judgment.

Whoever were the firſt of the human race, and by whatever means they came into exiſtence, unleſs the courſe of nature was wholly different from what it is known to be now, they muſt have periſhed without foreign aſſiſtance. Whether men were produced

produced in a ſtate of infancy, or of perfect manhood, will make no difference; becauſe our ideas, the elements of all our knowledge, have no inlets beſides the external ſenſes, and theſe muſt be uſed and exerciſed before they can give us any information of things without us; and theſe ideas muſt be variouſly combined and compared, before we could, by their means, form any proper judgment of things, or take any proper and ſafe meaſures for our conduct. A child left to itſelf would be more helpleſs than any other young animal. It muſt neceſſarily periſh; and a grown man, with no more knowledge than a new-born child, would be as little able to take care of himſelf. Whenever, therefore, men were firſt produced, they muſt have had ſome inſtructions communicated to them by their maker; ſo that what we may properly call *divine revelation* was abſolutely neceſſary in the firſt ſtage of our exiſtence.

It is agreeable, however, to the general plan of providence, that no more ſupernatural

tural inſtruction be given to men than is abſolutely neceſſary to their well being; and where their own reaſon and obſervation were able, in any good meaſure, to anſwer the purpoſe, they have been left to its guidance; though in this caſe much error, and much inconvenience, have ariſen from the falſe judgments that men, thus left to their own experience and obſervation, will fall into. One reaſon of this may be, that knowledge acquired by experience is of much more value than that which is acquired by inſtruction. It makes a much deeper impreſſion, ſo as to be more ſurely retained, and more effectually applied in the conduct of life. This we ſee in all children. One fall, and conſequent hurt, will teach them caution infinitely better than any admonitions of their parents or guides.

Now it has pleaſed our univerſal parent to truſt the whole human race as we, if we act wiſely, treat children, *i. e.* leave them as much as they ſafely may be to themſelves, interpoſing only to prevent ſome great

great and fatal evil, of which it was impoſſible that they ſhould be ſufficiently apprized themſelves. And if we conſider the ſtate of the world in very early ages, deſtitute of the knowledge that has ſince been acquired by experience and obſervation, and the lights that have been derived from revelation, we ſhall be convinced that ſome ſupernatural inſtruction was highly expedient, if not abſolutely neceſſary, if it was the ultimate intention of our Maker to train men to virtue here, and happineſs hereafter.

It has pleaſed divine providence to leave ſo many of the human race in this ſtate of natural ignorance; and the conſequence of it has been ſo fatal, that we ſee the greateſt reaſon to be thankful for that ſupernatural inſtruction which has been afforded to ſome, and which has, by their means, been communicated to others. But many perſons in this advanced age of the world have no idea how great the ignorance of the early ages was, or of what mankind have ſuffered in conſequence of it. It may, therefore,

therefore, be of uſe to ſtate a few unqueſtionable facts, in order to demonſtrate this, and to ſhew that the greater light we now enjoy did not, in reality, come from the uſe of reaſon, but from another and higher ſource.

Whatever the firſt parents of the human race might have been taught themſelves, and endeavoured to teach their poſterity, unqueſtionable hiſtory carries us back to a period in which all mankind, with very few exceptions, and thoſe not of a people the moſt famed for their wiſdom, imagined there was a multiplicity of ſuperior Beings directing the affairs of the world; that theſe deities were of very different diſpoſitions and characters, ſome diſpoſed to do good, and others to do evil, to men; and that their favour was to be procured by rites and ceremonies inſtituted in their honour, and frequently by actions, ſome of which are now univerſally deemed abominable, and others cruel; ſo that what was called *religion*, was far from having any connexion with good morals.

Divination, magical arts, and necromancy, were alſo an important part of the heathen religions. They had a great variety of rules by which to judge of the good or bad ſucceſs of their ſchemes and projects, eſpecially appearances in their ſacrifices, as the form and poſition of the entrails of the beaſts ſlain, &c. And in order to gain favour, or enſure revenge, they had recourſe to various practices, which they had been led to believe had a connexion with the object of their wiſhes. Alſo, what to us appears moſt extraordinary, but it is not the leſs true, is, that the more ingenious, and the more highly civilized, any of theſe antient nations were, the greater was the number of their ſuperſtitious obſervances.

The proper cauſe of theſe wretched ſuperſtitions, was, as the apoſtle juſtly calls it, *ignorance.* It was men's ignorance of nature, and of the true cauſes of events: but ſuch ignorance as it was not in their power wholly to remove. Things were continually happening unexpected by them,

the cauſes of them being what they could not ſee or comprehend, and therefore they concluded, that the cauſe was ſome inviſible power, the agency of which no human power or ſagacity could control. But, as at firſt they had no idea of any thing abſolutely *inviſible*, they aſcribed theſe events to the influence of ſuch viſible objects as the ſun, moon, and ſtars, the greateſt and moſt powerful of the viſible agents in nature; imagining that the good and evil which they did proceeded from deſign, and therefore either that they were themſelves intelligent Beings, or actuated by intelligent Beings reſiding in them, and directing their influence.

Though mankind in general might retain the idea of one ſupreme mind, which had been communicated to them by their firſt parents, yet not being able to conceive how one mind could ſufficiently attend to every thing, they might think there were inferior intelligences, to whom different departments in the government of the world were delegated. And, from this principle,

directing

directing their chief attention to theſe Beings, with whom they ſuppoſed they had more immediately to do, they would in time entirely loſe ſight of the one Supreme. They would have no act of worſhip directed to him, but would confine their regards to the inferior, and therefore imperfect Beings; and they would unavoidably form their ideas of their *characters* from what they ſuppoſed to proceed from them; judging from what they felt themſelves, and obſerved in other perſons, what they muſt *be*, in order to *do* as they did.

Accordingly, we find among Heathen nations characters of their gods, little, if at all, ſuperior to thoſe of men; ſome revengeful, ſome capricious, and ſome even libidinous; for proof of which we need only appeal to Homer, and the Grecian mythology in general. It was in order to render themſelves acceptable to ſome of theſe deities that they inflicted the greateſt cruelties upon others, and even upon themſelves, courting their favour by the moſt expenſive ſacrifices, and the moſt painful mortifications; and to recommend them-

ſelves to others, they indulged in ſuch abominable practices, as on any other occaſion they could not help regarding with deteſtation.

When once the worſhip of the one true God, a Being of perfect purity, as well as infinitely powerful and benevolent, was abandoned, the reſt followed of courſe; and that it was natural, is evident from a ſimilar idolatry, and ſimilar rites of worſhip, having been inſtituted in all ages, and in all parts of the world, among the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, and alſo in Hindoſtan, Mexico, and Peru.

We ſhall not much wonder at mankind in very early ages imagining ſuch bodies as the ſun, moon, and ſtars, and other natural objects, to be animated, if we conſider how prone children are to perſonify every thing that affects them, ſo as to feel real anger againſt any thing that is the occaſion of pain to them. Even many perſons grown up will frequently, before they reflect, be affected in a ſimilar manner. Whole nations of men, whoſe minds have not been cultivated, at this very day entertain notions exactly ſimilar to thoſe of the antients,

which

which led the way to idolatry. Thus the people of Sumatra, as Dr. Marſden inform us, have the moſt ſuperſtitious reſpect for the ſea, imagining its various motions to be voluntary, and not the effect of the action of the wind upon it.

The arts of magic and divination were equally owing to men's ignorance of the natural cauſes of events, and their taking up with fanciful cauſes inſtead of them. Nor ſhall we wonder at the ſuperſtition of the antients, when we reflect upon ſimilar ſuperſtition, owing to ſimilar ignorance, in many perſons of this enlightened age, in all countries, Chriſtians not excepted.

The antient Greeks and Romans, in order to obtain their revenge upon any perſon, made images of wax, wool, and other things, with certain ceremonies, and ſuppoſed that by melting, tearing, and otherwiſe abuſing thoſe images, the perſons whom they repreſented would ſuffer in the ſame manner. But notions exactly ſimilar to theſe (the remains, no doubt, of Heathen ſuperſtition) exiſt at this very day. I myſelf was intimately acquainted with a per-

ſon of conſiderable property, who, imagining his ſheep to have ſuffered by witchcraft, drove a ſtake through one of them while it was alive, and left it to periſh in that condition; really thinking that the perſon who had bewitched them would periſh at the ſame time that the ſheep did, though it was not poſſible for him to have any idea of the manner in which the ſuffering of the animal could be the cauſe of the ſuffering of the witch; and it was not in my power, though he was a man of much knowledge of the world, and of good ſenſe in other reſpects, to convince him that he had done wrong.

How many have there been, if they cannot be ſo readily found at preſent, who have profeſſed to cure wounds by practiſing on the weapon with which they were made, to cure warts by burying in the ground pieces of fleſh with which they have been rubbed, which fleſh, it is further curious to obſerve, muſt have been ſtolen; and how many are there who ſtill pretend to cure the ague, and other diſeaſes, by various *charms*, without any pro-

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per medical treatment. All theſe practices were ſuggeſted by ideas exactly ſimilar to thoſe which were the foundation of all the ſuperſtition and idolatry of the Heathens; proceeding from an equal ignorance of the cauſes of natural effects, and men's ſubſtituting imaginary cauſes in their places.

The antient Heathens judged of the ſucceſs of enterprizes by certain animals croſſing their paths in particular directions, or certain birds appearing to the right hand or to the left of them. But there are ſimilar appearances that are deemed lucky or unlucky among all ignorant perſons. Do not ſailors fancy they can procure a wind by whiſtling? and do not ſome gameſters really think to change their *luck*, as they call it, at cards, by changing their places at the table, or even turning round their chairs? Where there is equal ignorance, there will be equal ſuperſtition. As to fortune-telling by numberleſs appearances, and by aſtrology, or the poſitions of the ſtars and planets, there is at this day almoſt as much of it in practice, among ignorant peo-

ple, perſons of fortune and faſhion by no means excepted, as ever there was. We ſhall not wonder at the origin and progreſs of Heathen ſuperſtition, and Heathen idolatry, if we reflect upon what paſſes under our own eyes.

We ſhall not wonder at the long continuance of antient ſuperſtitions, unſupported as they are by facts and experience, if we conſider, that whatever becomes generally believed, on whatever ground, continues to be believed; the faith of the father being, in moſt caſes, eaſily tranſmitted to the ſon, without any examination of his own, from his having ſeen no reaſon to diſtruſt it. Alſo a ſingle fact favourable to an eſtabliſhed opinion will be more talked of, and thereby make more impreſſion, than many that are unfavourable to it, which will be accounted for on ſome principle or other, ſo as not to invalidate the general maxim.

This we ſee in various ill-founded prognoſtics concerning the weather, from its raining, or not raining, on particular days in the week, at certain ſeaſons of the year; which you will hear recited, and aſſerted

to

to have been confirmed by the uniform experience of old men, who received them from their fathers, who likewiſe atteſted their truth; though you well know that it is impoſſible, in the nature of things, that they ſhould have any juſt foundation at all. In fact, rules concerning the weather depending on the moon are no better founded, though they retain almoſt univerſal credit. Indications of the future fortune of perſons from moles, and other natural marks on their bodies, though laughed at by men of ſenſe, are ſtill regarded by the vulgar. Being of great antiquity, even ſuch ſilly maxims as theſe will not ſoon be univerſally given up.

Now conſidering the ſhocking and abominable nature of the practices which are known to have prevailed among the Heathens, as belonging to their religion, which nothing but a deeper knowledge of nature than they had any means of attaining could prevent, was it not wiſe, and kind, in the univerſal parent of mankind, to interpoſe, and forbid ſuch hurtful practices, by inſtituting a religion that ſhould be favourable

to decency and good morals? And ſuch was the religion of the patriarchs and of the Jews.

This was the only religion that taught the great doctrine of the unity of God, the maker and immediate governor of all things, that this God is omnipreſent and omniſcient, poſſeſſed of infinite power, wiſdom, and goodneſs; and every thing tending to impurity or cruelty was ſtrictly forbidden in his worſhip. Doctrines ſo truly ſublime, and ſo favourable to virtue, we in vain look for in the religion of the Egyptians, Babylonians, Tyrians, or any other antient nations, the moſt famed for their civilization and knowledge.

Theſe doctrines we are taught in our catechiſms. They are conſequently among the earlieſt impreſſions on our minds, and therefore we are apt to think them *natural*, and of eaſy acquirement. But the hiſtory of all ages and nations proves the contrary. And if we duly reflect upon the ſubject, we ſhall be ſenſible that the doctrines of the unity of God, of his immediate univerſal government, and his perfect benevolence,

lence, were far too ſublime for the early comprehenſion of mankind. The infinite variety of objects in nature, and of events in life, would naturally ſuggeſt the idea of various, and variouſly diſpoſed, Beings for the authors of them, juſt as different kinds of productions, and actions, are naturally aſcribed to different characters in men.

It is true that there is, in reality, an *uniformity*, and an *unity of deſign*, in the works of nature and providence; but this is not eaſily diſcovered. The firſt thing that ſtrikes us is the infinite *diverſity* of objects, ſome affecting us agreeably, and others diſagreeably, ſome good, and others, as we are apt to think, evil; and hence naturally ariſes the doctrine of at leaſt *two principles* in nature, and theſe oppoſite to one another. And though, ſince there is a prevalence of good, it was concluded that the good principle was ſuperior to the evil one, yet it would not ſeem that the good principle could wholly exclude the evil one; and ſince men have univerſally thought it more behoved them to conciliate the favour of evil Beings, than that of good ones, who were

were not diſpoſed to injure them, hence the great prevalence of rites of a horrid and diſguſting nature, in all the Heathen religions.

That mankind, if left to themſelves, would ever have attained to the idea of one ſupreme, uncontrolled cauſe, without whoſe appointment or permiſſion nothing can ever come to paſs, and that nothing comes to paſs but what has the beſt tendency, being really, though not apparently, ſubſervient to good, is highly improbable. Still leſs probable is it, that the moral character of the one cauſe of all things ſhould have been ſo eſtabliſhed, as to be the foundation of a rational and uſeful worſhip. So far were men, though with every advantage of cultivation in other reſpects, from this degree of knowledge, that though it is probable that juſt maxims of religion were communicated to the firſt parents of mankind, appearances in nature were thought to be ſo unfavourable to them, that they became extinct, and a monſtrous polytheiſm, the parent of the moſt abominable licentiouſneſs, univerſally prevailed.

So

So prone are men to entertain an idea of different deities, ſuperintending different provinces in nature, and the adminiſtration of human affairs, that even after the diſpenſation of the goſpel, when it might be thought that the doctrine of the unity of God, and the adminiſtration of providence by himſelf, on which ſo much ſtreſs is laid in the ſcriptures, had been fully eſtabliſhed, idolatry again crept into the worſhip of imperfect mortals. The human mind was again diſtracted, and the human character again debaſed, by an attention to a multiplicity of objects of worſhip, and the one true God was again overlooked, even by Chriſtians.

Wholly occupied in their devotion to the virgin Mary, and innumerable other ſaints and angels, whom alone the ſuperſtitious Catholics addreſs on all the different occaſions of human life, one, for example, for ſailors, and others for other deſcriptions of men, or men in other ſituations, the worſhip of Chriſtians came to have as many objects as that of the Heathens. Chriſtian idolatry had, however, this advantage over Heathen-

iſm,

iſm, that no Chriſtian ſaint was the patron of vice, though its influence with reſpect to morals was greatly diminiſhed; many ſubſtitutes being provided for moral virtue, which the worſhip of one God, and that a Being of perfect purity, would never have admitted.

How, then, does experience, or obſervation, juſtify us in ſuppoſing that ſupernatural inſtruction was not neceſſary with reſpect to the great articles of the unity of God, and the purity of his worſhip, as a guard againſt immorality in the worſhippers? As it were to convince us of the contrary, God was pleaſed to permit whole nations of men, the moſt famed for their wiſdom and knowledge in other reſpects, to ſink into the moſt deplorable ignorance of his nature and worſhip, teaching a choſen and deſpiſed few the true knowledge of himſelf, and the purity of his worſhip, and by their means gradually enlightening the minds of the reſt of mankind; and thankful ſhould we be that this ſalutary light has reached us.

If we conſider (but few perſons have ſufficient

ficient knowledge of antiquity to do it) how much of men's time was taken up by omens, and the buſineſs of divination, ſo as miſerably to diſtreſs their minds, and impede their exertions, in all Heathen countries, we ſhall be equally thankful for the poſitive, authoritative prohibition of ſuch ſuperſtitious obſervances, by the univerſal parent of mankind, before their own reaſon could diſcover the vanity and folly of them. What imaginable connexion had the eagerneſs of chickens to eat their food in the morning, or the particular form of the liver of a victim, killed at that time, with the event of a battle in the couſe of the day? and yet the Romans, experienced as they were in the art of war, and who therefore had ſufficient opportunity to diſcover the fallacy of thoſe things, were never able to diveſt themſelves of the idea of their being true prognoſtics. Of what conſequence was it whether an army began its march before, or after, the full moon? and yet the Lacedemonians, the moſt famous, not only for bravery, but for military ſkill in general, were the moſt

rigid obſervers of it. And if, towards the latter periods of the Grecian and Roman hiſtories, the general and principal officers had the good ſenſe to get above ſo ſilly a prejudice, they were under the neceſſity of deceiving the common ſoldiers by falſe reports of omens.

But, indeed, the wiſeſt of the Greeks and Romans were often among the moſt ſuperſtitious, and their affairs ſuffered moſt materially in conſequence of it. The fineſt army that the Athenians ever ſent out, and eventually the ſtate itſelf, was ruined by the general refuſing to put to ſea during an eclipſe of the moon.

The buſineſs of divination and omens made a great part of the religion of all the Heathen nations, whether civilized or not. How then ſhould that of the Jews be the only one that eſcaped? But by their lawgiver they were taught to hold all thoſe practices in juſt contempt and abhorrence. Of themſelves they could no more have been able to ſee the folly of theſe obſervances than other people. They muſt, therefore, have had their ſuperior information

tion from a Being who knew more of the real laws of nature, and the true cauſes of events, than any of the human race; and who did not chooſe that this deplorable ignorance, ſo debaſing to the mind, and ſo prejudicial to men's affairs, ſhould be univerſal; but that one nation, by no means ſo much improved in other reſpects as their neighbours, ſhould be free from it; and that by their means this freedom from ſuperſtition, as well as idolatry, ſhould be extended to all the world.

How prone men are to ſuperſtition, we ſee even among Chriſtians, notwithſtanding the light of divine revelation, and not only in the remains of Heatheniſm, which are numberleſs among the common people in all Chriſtian countries, but in things peculiar to Chriſtianity. Whatever connects the favour of God and future happineſs with any thing beſides moral virtue, is ſuperſtition, and of a moſt debaſing and miſchievous nature; and yet almoſt the whole of what is called Popery is of this kind. Time was when a man who had endowed a church, made a pilgrimage, confeſſed to a prieſt,

prieſt, diſcharged his penance, received abſolution, and was buried in the habit of a Franciſcan monk, or who had provided for maſſes to be ſaid for him after he was dead, thought himſelf as ſure of the happineſs of Heaven as if he had kept all the commandments of God. And too many there are, even among Proteſtants, who are far from laying the ſtreſs that they ought to do upon their own perſonal virtue.

The ſcriptures, however, teach the ſoundeſt and pureſt morality, free from every thing approaching to ſuperſtition; and when they ſhall be thoroughly underſtood, and duly attended to, but not till then, this miſerable, debaſing ſuperſtition will be baniſhed the world. And then will our undivided homage be paid to the one living and true God, the God and father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and he will be worſhipped by purity of heart and integrity of life, in *ſpirit and in truth.* But it is revelation only that ſupplies the proper and effectual cure of ſuperſtition, in this form, as well as in every other, aſſigning the true cauſe of the deſired effect.

More,

More, evidently, ſtill, are we indebted to revelation, and not at all to human reaſon, however cultivated, for the knowledge of a *future ſtate.* The thicker is the veil that nature throws over every thing belonging to the ſtate of the dead, the more buſy has the imagination of man been in prying into it. When it had been imagined, that not only the celeſtial bodies, but the earth, ſeas, rivers, trees, and all the inanimate parts of nature, had ſome inviſible power accompanying them, ſo that they could be invoked, and their aſſiſtance engaged by men, a ſimilar inviſible power, or principle, was ſoon ſuppoſed to reſide in men and other animals, and even to remain with them after they were dead, ſo that dead men became the objects of worſhip, as well as other parts of nature.

Dead men, however, appear to have been invoked for the purpoſe of necromancy, or in order to pry into futurity, before they were made the proper objects of worſhip, or ranked among the *gods*, capable of doing good or evil to living men; and this practice took place before they had any diſtinct

idea of an immaterial ſoul. For when, in conſequence of theſe arts of necromancy, uſed by the witch of Endor, Samuel was ſuppoſed to be raiſed from the dead, there was the appearance of an old man, habited juſt as Samuel had been, riſing out of the earth, which could not have been the natural place of an immaterial ſoul; and it is not called the ſoul of Samuel, but Samuel himſelf. Nor is there in the ſcriptures any mention of the ſoul of any particular perſon as a ſubſtance diſtinct from the body, either as exiſting in this life, or in another. The rich man and Lazarus, in our Saviour's parable, are not deſcribed as the ſouls of thoſe men, but as the men themſelves, ſuppoſed to be removed into another ſtate.

On whatever principle it was that dead men were thought to be acceſſible to the living, the modes of application to them, in the arts of necromancy, form a great part of the religion of all the antient nations; and by this they not only miſerably bewildered themſelves, and loſt their time in a fruitleſs purſuit, but were led, as is well

well known, to ſome horrid and cruel practices, numberleſs living perſons having been ſacrificed to the manes of the dead.

Among the Jews alone, of all the nations of the world, were the deteſtable arts of necromancy ſtrictly forbidden. Their religion was the only one that was free from this great ſtain. Now, to what could this remarkable exception have been owing, but to a wiſdom ſuperior to their own, or to that of man; which, before they themſelves could have diſcovered that the practices were vain, prevented their adopting them, and revealed to them what is really true, and moſt important, with reſpect to the ſtate of the dead, and which no human reaſon could ever have diſcovered, viz. that at a future period they are all to riſe again, when all men will receive according to their works.

This is the great and peculiar doctrine of revelation, and eſpecially of the New Teſtament, Jeſus Chriſt having been commiſſioned *to bring life and immortality to light by his goſpel*, giving the moſt ample proof of a divine miſſion, by working un-

queſtionable miracles, and what is more, himſelf dying in the moſt public manner, and riſing again within a limited time, as the moſt ſatisfactory proof, and exemplification, of his doctrine.

To this divine light let us diligently attend, and be thankful to the great Father of lights that to us, in this remote part of the world, *ſo great a light has ſhined.* Let us rejoice that we are called out of the ſtate of Heatheniſh darkneſs and ſuperſtition that I have deſcribed to you, and which it pleaſed God, in his infinite wiſdom, ſo long to wink at. But *now*, as the apoſtle continues, *he calls upon all men every where to repent, ſince he has appointed a day*, and given ſufficient notice of it, *in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he has ordained, even Jeſus Chriſt.*

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE III.

Of the Miracles by which the Deliverance of the Iſraelites from their Bondage in Egypt was effected.

And Iſrael ſaw the great works which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord, and his ſervant Moſes.

EXOD. xiv. 31.

THERE is nothing ſo intereſting to man as the intercourſe he has with his Maker, becauſe his happineſs is moſt nearly concerned in it; and the more intereſted we are in any thing, the more it behoves us to ſee that we be not impoſed upon, but that we have ſufficient ground for our belief. Reaſon and revelation are equally enemies to implicit faith, and require that we do not give our aſſent to important propoſitions without the moſt ſatisfactory evidence.

Though when any object of faith is of a

pleaſing nature, we may be thought diſpoſed to take up with leſs evidence, yet the magnitude of any thing will always require a proportionably clear proof. Thus we cannot doubt but that the apoſtles were pleaſed with the idea of their maſter's reſurrection, yet the greatneſs of the event begat a diſpoſition to incredulity; and we read that when they were firſt informed of it, and upon no apparently ſuſpicious ground, *they believed not through joy.* They thought the news too good to be true, and they did not give their full aſſent to the joyful tidings till they had the moſt overbearing evidence, ſuch as no diſpoſition to incredulity could reſiſt.

It behoves us, therefore, to examine with the moſt ſcrupulous attention every circumſtance in hiſtories of intercourſe between God and man; and at this time I ſhall ſelect for your attentive conſideration, the firſt of which we have an account from eye-witneſſes, I mean the deliverance of the Iſraelites from their ſtate of ſervitude in Egypt, and the promulgation of the law from Mount Sinai, recorded in the writ-

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ings of Moſes, who was himſelf the chief inſtrument in theſe wonderful events.

Prior to this the Iſraelites had been in Egypt about two hundred years, about the latter half of which term they had been reduced to a ſtate of the moſt abject ſervitude. This was evidently the caſe at the birth of Moſes, who was himſelf ſaved in an extraordinary manner from being drowned, in conſequence of an order to throw every male child of the Iſraelites into the river, and he was eighty years old when he received his commiſſion to effect their deliverance. It is probable, therefore, that they had been enſlaved, and oppreſſed, in various forms, about a hundred years, though the order for the deſtruction of the male children had been withdrawn.

During this period of extreme oppreſſion it is probable that the Iſraelites had in general ceaſed to worſhip the God of their fathers, and had conformed to the ſuperſtitions of their maſters, which they would do the more readily from ſeeing the very flouriſhing ſtate they were in, and their

own abject condition. For, in all the early ages of the world, outward proſperity was conſidered as the conſequence of the public religion of any people; and the better condition of any nation with reſpect to any other, as a proof of the ſuperiority of the gods they worſhipped.

God had informed Abraham, that his poſterity would be in bondage in Egypt; but that after four hundred years (reckoning, as it appears, from the time of the prediction) they would be delivered, and become a great nation. This promiſe, however, they ſeem to have forgotten, or to have loſt all faith in. Moſes himſelf had abandoned his countrymen, and had been forty years reſident in Arabia, where he had married a wife, ſo that it is probable he had no expectation of any thing very flattering being reſerved for his nation. He had even neglected the rite of circumciſion, which was the peculiar ſymbol of the divine promiſe to the deſcendants of Abraham. For it was only in conſequence of the interpoſition of an angel, or ſome ſupernatural appearance, that he

was

was compelled to perform this rite on his ſon, on his return to Egypt.

In this ſituation of things there did not appear to be any proſpect of relief from this ſtate of bondage. And, alarmed as the Egyptians were at the increaſe of the Iſraelites, it may be taken for granted that the uſe of arms was ſtrictly forbidden them, while their maſters appear to have been the moſt warlike people in that age of the world; having not only an armed infantry, but multitudes of horſes and chariots for war.

Suppoſing the Iſraelites to have been ſo oppreſſed as to be driven to deſpair, and to have come to a determination to abandon the country at all events, it is probable that they would have ſought ſome place of retreat, where they were likely to meet with the leaſt reſiſtance, either from the country being thinly inhabited, or inhabited by an unwarlike people. But inſtead of this, they not only emancipate themſelves, but take poſſeſſion of a country inhabited by the moſt warlike people in the world next to their maſters, if they were not

not equal to them. For the inhabitants of Canaan were likewiſe practiſed in war, and had horſes and chariots like the Egyptians. And this warlike people was not taken by ſurpriſe, but had ſufficient notice of the invaſion, and, no doubt, took every method in their power to defeat it.

By what means, then, was this extraordinary deliverance of the Iſraelites from their bondage in Egypt, and their ſettlement in the land of Canaan, effected? Moſes, whoſe account was written at the time, and with all the minuteneſs, and other marks of authenticity, of any modern journal, informs us, that it was in conſequence of a ſeries of miraculous interpoſitions; and his account was received as genuine and unqueſtionable by thoſe who were the beſt judges of its truth, viz. thoſe among whom it was written; and it continues to be believed by them to this day, though they were frequently indiſpoſed to the religious inſtitutions which were enjoined them in conſequence of this very deliverance.

The ſubſtance of the account given by Moſes

Moſes is as follows. While he was in Arabia, where he had reſided forty years, following his occupation of a ſhepherd, the appearance of a flame of fire in a buſh, which was not conſumed by it, attracted his attention. On his approach to it, an audible voice iſſued out of it, from a perſon who announced himſelf to be the God of his fathers, who had ſeen the affliction of his people, and commiſſioned him to go and deliver them. When he heſitated, and ſhewed the moſt extreme backwardneſs to undertake the commiſſion, and ſaid that his nation would not believe that God had ſent him, he was ordered to throw down the ſtaff that was in his hand, when it inſtantly became a ſerpent, and then to take it up, when it became a ſtaff again in his hand. He was likewiſe directed to ſtretch forth his hand, when it became leprous, and to pull it to him again, when it was reſtored ſound as before.

Theſe extraordinary appearances convinced *him* that the Being by whom he was addreſſed was, indeed, the God of his fathers, to whom ſimilar inſtances of power

had

had been aſcribed. He, therefore, though with extreme reluctance, went to the heads of his nation, and, as he had been ordered, exhibited the ſame miracles before them, who were thereby convinced that God had ſent him. He then went to Pharaoh, and openly demanded leave for his countrymen to go into the wilderneſs, in order to make a ſacrifice to their own God; and after repeated miracles, to convince him of the authority with which he made the demand, ſome of which conſiſted of the moſt awful judgments upon him and his nation, Pharaoh's conſent was obtained. But repenting of his compliance, he purſued them, and following them through the red ſea, which had divided to make way for them, he and his army periſhed. After this, according to the account of Moſes, the Iſraelites entered the wilderneſs, where they were fed by a miracle forty years. We are alſo informed, that, after their leaving Egypt, God, in an audible voice, delivered to them the ten commandments from Mount Sinai, as the foundation of a new inſtitution of religion, the particulars of which

which were communicated to Moſes himſelf.

Let us now conſider how this remarkable ſtory is circumſtanced with reſpect to its credibility, both in the age of Moſes himſelf, and at this diſtance of time; who were the witneſſes of theſe events, what motives they had to examine into their truth, and what effects they produced in their conduct.

It is evident, that neither the Iſraelites, nor the Egyptians, were at all prediſpoſed to expect ſuch events as are recorded. The Iſraelites ſeem to have given themſelves up to deſpair, and to have acquieſced in their abject condition. Moſes had fled, and ſeems to have had no thought of ever returning to Egypt; and the Egyptians were far from having any apprehenſions of loſing ſuch an uſeful ſet of ſervants as the Iſraelites were; ſo that there does not appear to have been any ſufficient natural cauſe of exciting the hopes of the one, or the fears of the other.

They who ſuppoſe that the Iſraelites were emancipated by natural means con-

ſider Moſes as a bold and able politician. But he does not appear, in the whole hiſtory, to have ſhewn either much courage, or much ſagacity. He had nothing in him of an enterpriſing nature, and never had that confidence in himſelf which was neceſſary for ſo great an undertaking. Of this every part of his hiſtory, which is wonderfully conſiſtent with itſelf, is a proof.

Had Moſes been of an enterpriſing diſpoſition, it would, no doubt, have appeared earlier, and would not have lain dormant till he was eighty years old, when he had reſided ſo long in a foreign country as to be in a manner unknown to his countrymen, and not likely to have much influence with them. His having been educated in the court of Pharaoh, if it was not forgotten, would lead the Egyptians to watch him with the greateſt care, ſo as to give him the feweſt opportunities of exciting any revolt among his countrymen.

Had he had any ſcheme of this kind, he would, no doubt, have concealed himſelf among his countrymen, and would not have

have applied to Pharaoh till he had prepared them for reſiſtance, and had taken his meaſures to defeat the attempts of the Egyptians to prevent their eſcape; whereas he appears to have uſed no precautions of this kind. No arms, or ſtores, were provided, no alliance made with other nations, and, in ſhort, nothing was done which any ſenſible man muſt have ſeen to be neceſſary for the ſucceſs of ſo great an enterpriſe.

The emancipation of the Iſraelites, therefore, in this ſtate of things, does not appear to have been effected by the policy of man, and conſequently it is the more probable, that, ſince it was effected, it was by the immediate hand of God, in the manner related by Moſes.

Moſes was neither a warrior, nor an orator, ſo that he was deſtitute of every natural requiſite for ſuch an undertaking as the emancipation of his countrymen from the power of the Egyptians. The impediment he had in his ſpeech laid him under the neceſſity of employing his brother Aaron even to ſpeak for him; and when, in the courſe of the hiſtory, a battle

was

was to be fought, Joſhua commanded, while he only prayed at a diſtance. Such was his diffidence of himſelf, that he was ſeveral times upon the point of abandoning his charge altogether, unable to contend with the many difficulties with which he was ſurrounded. When he was much embarraſſed with buſineſs, he was relieved, not by any ſagacity of his own, but by the ſenſible advice of his father-in-law Jethro.

Whatever Moſes might have been taught of the learning of the Egyptians, it either amounted to very little, or, if it had any relation to the powers of nature, he retained but little of it, as he ſeems to have been impoſed upon by the tricks of the magicians, who imitated his miracles. For with the greateſt ſimplicity he ſays, that thoſe magicians did the very ſame that he did, in changing their rods into ſerpents, Exod. vii. 11, water into blood, v. 22, and in bringing frogs upon the land, ch. viii. 7. From this he would probably infer, that theſe magicians were aſſiſted by ſome ſuperior beings, but that the power of his God was greater than that of theirs. Of

this

this he could have no doubt, from the ſerpent into which Aaron's rod was changed ſwallowing up thoſe which had been ſubſtituted in the place of their rods, and eſpecially from their not being able to remove the plagues with which his God had afflicted them.

As this perſuaſion was ſufficient for his purpoſe, and would encourage him to perſiſt in what he had undertaken, he was permitted, as far as appears, to remain ignorant of their arts. The frequent intervention of ſuperior beings, and the power of certain forms of words and ceremonies, to bring down, and to direct, the agency of thoſe beings, was the belief of all mankind in the early ages of the world; and it was nothing but Chriſtianity, which led to the better philoſophy of modern times, that has undeceived mankind in this reſpect. This belief has even ſtill greater power over the vulgar in all Chriſtian countries, *charms*, as they are called, being in daily uſe for the cure of diſorders, and many other purpoſes. Moſes had no doubt of the reality of his own miracles, being conſcious that he had re-

courſe to no artifice whatever; and believing that the Egyptian prieſts had ſupernatural aſſiſtance of a ſimilar nature, though inferior to that which accompanied him, he relates what appeared to him to be the fact, on both ſides, with equal ſimplicity.

That the miracles of Moſes could not have been any trick, is evident, from the magnitude of them, and from other circumſtances attending them. In the firſt inſtance, it was not a ſmall quantity of water, ſuch as might have been contained in a baſon, that appeared to have been converted into blood, or to become red like blood, which was probably all that the Egyptian magicians effected, and which many perſons at this day could perform as well as they, but it was all the water of the river, ſo that the people could not make any uſe of it, but were obliged to dig wells. As the like has never happened to this river before, or to any other river ſince that time, it is evident that there muſt have been a miracle in the caſe. This change muſt alſo have affected the river through the whole of its extent, and have continued a con-

a conſiderable time, otherwiſe freſh water would ſoon have diluted the vitiated, and in a ſhort time the river would have purged itſelf. Suppoſing this change in the river to have been introduced by ſome natural, but at preſent unknown, cauſe, yet as it had operated only at the time that Moſes foretold that it would, there muſt have been ſomething miraculous in his foreknowledge of that event; for he could not himſelf have been able to effect what he declared would certainly come to paſs.

This extraordinary miracle continued ſeven days, and by what means this change in the river ceaſed we are not told; but preſently after came the plague of frogs, which did not conſiſt in the introduction of a few of them into one particular place, but infeſted the whole land of Egypt, and yet on the prayer of Moſes they all died in the towns and villages in one day, and remained only in the river.

Allowing Moſes to have learned ſome tricks of legerdemain of the Egyptian magicians, he could not have been more expert than his maſters, eſpecially as he had been

out of the country forty years, and in the mean time they could not have loſt, but, probably, would have gained, ſkill in their arts, ſo that they might eaſily have detected any trick of his. Beſides, he was but one man, or at moſt was only aſſiſted by his brother Aaron; whereas they were many, which gives a great advantage in things of this nature.

In the next miracle all the duſt in the land, it is ſaid, became lice, both upon man and upon beaſt, that is, the quantity was ſo great, that it ſeemed as if all the duſt of the country had been converted into lice. After this a ſwarm of flies filled the whole country, and yet, on the prayer of Moſes, they were all removed, and not one remained.

In the next place, on the word of Moſes, a grievous murrain fell upon all the cattle of Egypt, but not upon thoſe of the Iſraelites, the day after it was threatened; and then, on the ſimple ſprinkling of aſhes into the air, the plague of boils came upon man and upon beaſt, and even upon the magicians themſelves, while they ſtood in the preſence of Moſes and Pharaoh, which

ſhews

ſhews that they had no power to counteract that which accompanied Moſes.

After this a grievous hail-ſtorm, accompanied with thunder and lightning, a thing never known in that country, and ſo ſevere that not only the more tender herbs, but even the trees of the field, were broken by it; and yet upon that part of the country which the Iſraelites inhabited there was no hail. This calamity, contrary to its uſual nature, muſt have continued ſome time; but at the entreaty of Pharaoh, and the prayer of Moſes, it immediately ceaſed.

After the hail followed the locuſts, which devoured every green thing in the whole land; and this alſo, at the relenting of Pharaoh, and the prayer of Moſes, was entirely removed.

The next miracle was an extraordinary darkneſs where the Egyptians lived, while it continued light with the Iſraelites. And the laſt miracle was of a ſtill more extraordinary nature, viz. the death of the firſt-born, and of the firſt-born only, of man and of beaſt too, in one particular night, through the whole land of Egypt, while

not one of the Iſraelites died, and this peremptorily foretold before the event.

Things of this magnitude could never have been effected by art, and it is evident that the magicians of Egypt were ſenſible that they were produced by ſupernatural power. For upon the miracle of the lice they could not help confeſſing it. *This*, ſaid they, *is the finger of God.* Exod. viii. 19. On this they deſiſted from making any more attempts to imitate the miracles of Moſes, afraid, probably, to proceed any farther.

In order to commemorate the moſt extraordinary event, the ſparing the firſt-born of Iſrael, while thoſe of the Egyptians were deſtroyed, a peculiar rite was inſtituted, and announced before the event. It conſiſted of killing and eating a lamb with particular ceremonies at that time of every future year, to be continued as long as they ſhould be a nation, the firſt time of celebration taking place on the very night on which the event to be commemorated happened. No record of any event could be more unexceptionable than this; ſo that the continuance of the cuſtom, which all

Jews

Jews keep up to this day, is an unqueſtionable proof of the reality of the fact, much more than any other known cuſtom is a proof of any other fact connected with it, as that of our making bonfires in commemoration of the gunpowder-plot in England; the event commemorated, and the ſign of it, taking place at the ſame inſtant of time, and the event being recorded while it was freſh in the memory of all the witneſſes of it, who were not a few individuals, but a whole nation, and that the leaſt diſpoſed to credulity, as their whole hiſtory, and their preſent character, abundantly prove.

The paſſage of the Iſraelites through the red ſea was a miracle on a ſtill larger ſcale, and had greater conſequences, viz. the total deſtruction of Pharaoh's great hoſt of armed chariots and horſes, and of himſelf along with them. That this great event ſhould be accounted for in a natural way is abſolutely impoſſible. Had the waters been driven back by a ſtrong wind, as nothing but the continued force of the wind could have kept them in that ſituation, it would

not have been poſſible for man or beaſt, and ſtill more for chariots, to have paſſed during the blowing of it, and yet it is evident that they did it, and at their leiſure. Beſides, the waters were held back on *both ſides*, which could not have been effected by a wind, blowing in any one direction whatever. The former of theſe obſervations will apply to the paſſage of the Iſraelites through the river Jordan, which divided to make way for them during the ſeaſon of its overflowing its banks, and which continued a whole day, as that through the red ſea continued the whole night.

The effect of theſe miracles, and eſpecially of this laſt, impreſſed the people greatly. They were not things which they had heard of others, but what they had ſeen themſelves. For, as we read in my text, Exod. xiv. 21, *Iſrael ſaw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord, and they believed the Lord, and his ſervant Moſes.* They were convinced that, notwithſtanding the boaſted wiſdom of the Egyptians, and their great ſuperiority to all other nations (for not

not only Babylon, but even Nineveh, the mother of Babylon, had no exiſtence at that time) notwithſtanding their immenſe armed force, their horſes and their chariots; and notwithſtanding their devotedneſs to their gods, for which they were always celebrated, neither their policy, their arms, or their gods, could avail them againſt the power of Jehovah, who was their own God, when it was thus wonderfully and ſeaſonably exerted. And we find, in the courſe of the hiſtory, that the impreſſion which theſe events made on all the neighbouring nations was very great, and that they ever after retained an idea of the ſuperiority of the God of Iſrael to their own deities, though this did not induce them to relinquiſh their worſhip; it being the fixed perſuaſion of all mankind in thoſe early ages, that there were many gods, or inviſible powers, on whom different nations or diſtricts, and different provinces in nature, depended.

The effect which it was apprehended the report of theſe miracles would have on the neighbouring nations is thus expreſſed

preſſed in the ſong of Moſes, Exod. xv. 14. *The people ſhall hear and be afraid, ſorrow ſhall take hold on the inhabitants of Paleſtine. Then the dukes of Edom ſhall be amazed, the mighty men of Moab, trembling ſhall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan ſhall melt away. Fear and dread ſhall fall upon them. By the greatneſs of thine arm ſhall they be as ſtill as a ſtone. The Lord ſhall reign for ever and ever.*

We ſee the impreſſion that theſe miracles made upon the Philiſtines remained upon their minds in the time of Samuel. For on the news of the ark being brought into the camp of the Iſraelites, they expreſs the greateſt apprehenſions. 1 Sam. iv. 7. *And the Philiſtines were afraid; for they ſaid, God is come into the camp. And they ſaid, Wo unto us! who ſhall deliver us out of the hand of theſe mighty Gods? Theſe are the Gods that ſmote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderneſs.* And in their conſultations about ſending back the ark, after they had ſuffered by detaining it, they ſay, 1 Sam. vi. 6, *Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh*

Pharaoh hardened their hearts, when he had wrought wonderfully among them? Did they not let the people go, and they departed? We may judge from this how generally these extraordinary facts were at that time known, and what an idea they excited of the power of the God of Israel.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE IV.

Of the Delivery of the Law from Mount Sinai, and other Miracles in the Wilderneſs,

And Iſrael ſaw the great works which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord, and his ſervant Moſes.

EXOD. xiv. 31.

IN diſcourſing from theſe words, I have begun to illuſtrate the evidence of the divine miſſion of Moſes, or the credibility of the miracles on which it is founded. I have already conſidered thoſe which were exhibited in Egypt, ſhewing, from their magnitude, and other circumſtances, eſpecially the effects which they produced, that there could not have been any impoſition in the caſe. I now proceed to direct your attention to thoſe which are recorded as having been exhibited in the wilderneſs, and they are

are of ſtill greater magnitude and importance.

From the red ſea the Iſraelites proceeded, without intermiſſion, a journey of three days, through the wilderneſs of Shur, till they came to a place which was afterwards called Mara, where the people murmured becauſe the waters were bitter, ſo that, though they were exhauſted with thirſt, they could not drink them. In this diſtreſſing ſituation, of which we, in this climate, can form but an imperfect idea, *the people murmured againſt Moſes, ſaying, What ſhall we drink?* EXOD. xv. 24. They would naturally imagine, that the ſame power which had brought them out of Egypt, in ſo wonderful a manner, would eaſily ſupply all their wants, and they would be much chagrined when they found themſelves diſappointed. This murmuring, however, did not imply any diſbelief in the power of their God, or in the divine miſſion of Moſes; and God was pleaſed to relieve their wants by directing Moſes to caſt a branch of a certain tree into the water,

ter, in conſequence of which they were able to drink it.

In this place it appears that the people halted, and Moſes took this opportunity of exhorting them, and making a kind of covenant with them in the name of God. Exod. xv. 25. *There he made for them a ſtatute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, and ſaid, If thou wilt diligently hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his ſight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his ſtatutes, I will put none of theſe diſeaſes* (or plagues) *upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord that healeth thee.*

Notwithſtanding this relief from the effects of thirſt, the people finding a want of proviſions (for what they had made in haſte for their journey could not laſt long) after fifteen days from their leaving Egypt, they again murmured againſt Moſes and Aaron, and repented that they had left Egypt. Exod. xvi. 2. *And the whole congregation of the children of Iſrael murmured againſt Moſes*

Moſes and againſt Aaron in the wilderneſs; and the children of Iſrael ſaid unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we ſat by the fleſh-pots, and when we did eat bread to the full. For ye have brought us forth into this wilderneſs to kill this whole aſſembly with hunger.

This circumſtance clearly ſhews, that no human proviſion had been made for the march of ſuch a number of people. The country they had to march through had not been explored, no ſtations had been fixed upon, and their proviſion entirely failed in a fortnight. How ill, then, muſt they have been prepared to march through the whole of that immenſe deſart which lay between them and the land of Canaan, of which they were going to take poſſeſſion. Indeed, every circumſtance in this remarkable hiſtory evidently ſhews, that the plan of this deliverance from Egypt was laid not by man, but by God, who, by his own power, with *a high hand*, as we read, *and an outſtretched arm*, himſelf executed it in all its parts. Nothing

thing was due to Moſes, or to any other leader, and therefore he juſtly replied to the people when they murmured, Exod. xvi. 18. *What are we? Your murmurings are not againſt us, but againſt the Lord.*

In this diſtreſs the people were relieved, Exod. xvi. 13, by the falling of a flight of quails, which covered the whole camp, that very evening; and the next morning they found, for the firſt time, all the country round them covered with a nouriſhing ſubſtance which they called *manna*, with which they were miraculouſly ſupplied ever after till they came to the borders of the land of Canaan. Though this manna could not uſually be kept more than one day, it was remarkable, that when none of it fell on the ſabbath day, but a double quantity the day before, it might be kept two days. Alſo a pot filled with it, and depoſited in the ark, was kept to future generations. Exod. xvi. 33.

Proceeding farther, to Rephidim, the people murmured again for want of water, Exod. xvii. 3, and there God relieved them by a perpetual ſtream, which iſſued

from a rock, on Moſes ſtriking it, by the command of God, with his rod. Theſe difficulties, in which the people found themſelves unexpectedly involved, did not lead them to diſbelieve the power of God, but only to fear he had deſerted them. This place Moſes denominated Meribah, Exod. xvii. 7, *becauſe of the chiding of the children of Iſrael, and becauſe they had tempted the Lord, ſaying, Is the Lord among us, or not?*

After this we have an account of a battle which the people had with the Amalekites in which Joſhua commanded, while Moſes only prayed for his ſucceſs. From this it is evident that he was no warrior; and as other circumſtances ſhew that he was not poſſeſſed of the wiſdom and ſagacity which are uſually aſcribed to him; and as he was of a moſt unambitious diſpoſition, he appears to have been by no means naturally qualified to undertake the conducting of his countrymen in the hazardous enterprize of leaving Egypt, then inhabited by a powerful people, and diſpoſſeſſing another warlike nation of a country in which they

had ſtrongly fortified themſelves. What he did was not from any impulſe of his own mind, but by ſupernatural direction and aſſiſtance.

The next tranſaction in the hiſtory, on which, for its ſingular importance, I ſhall dwell ſome time, took place in the third month after the Iſraelites had left Egypt (Exod. xiii. 1.) at Mount Sinai, where we find ſuch evidences of the preſence and power of God as had never been exhibited before, and which, in point of grandeur and magnificence, have never been equalled ſince; and the ſcene was ſo circumſtanced, that there could not poſſibly have been any deception, or impoſition, in the caſe. Hitherto the power of God had been abundantly diſplayed in great *events*. The ſucceſſive plagues of Egypt, and the paſſage through the red ſea, had been evidently effected by divine power; and the reſult had been ſuch a deliverance of a completely-enſlaved people, from the power of a wiſe and warlike nation, as no power or policy of their own could have effected, eſpecially in ſo ſhort a time, and in their circumſtances.

But

But every meſſage, or order, had been delivered to the Iſraelites, or to Pharaoh, by Moſes. The Divine Being had, in all the caſes, ſpoken to *him* in the firſt inſtance, and he had delivered the meſſage to them. But now every individual Iſraelite was to hear the voice of God himſelf.

Hitherto alſo the particular deſigns of Providence reſpecting this nation had not been diſtinctly announced, except in general terms to Abraham; and a promiſe of freedom from ſuch plagues as thoſe with which the Egyptians had been afflicted, if they would obey the voice of God, had been made to them at Elim. But now the great purpoſe of their deliverance from Egypt, and of every thing elſe that was to be done in favour of this nation, was to be clearly made known to them, and a regular *covenant* was to be eſtabliſhed between God and them, the effect of which was to continue to the end of time. This purpoſe of the Divine Being is thus announced to Moſes, Exod. xix. 5.

And Moſes went up unto God, and the

Lord called unto him out of the Mount, ſaying, Thus ſhalt thou ſay to the children of Iſrael, Ye have ſeen all that I did to the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles wings, and brought you unto myſelf. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye ſhall be a peculiar treaſure unto me above all people. For all the earth is mine; and ye ſhall be unto me a kingdom of prieſts, and a holy nation. Theſe are the words ye ſhall ſpeak unto the children of Iſrael.

In conſequence of this Moſes aſſembled the people, and delivered this important meſſage; and, as we read, Exod. xix. 8, *all the people anſwered together, and ſaid, All that the Lord hath ſpoken we will do. And Moſes returned the word of the people unto the Lord.*

The tranſaction having proceeded thus far, the ſolemn ratification of what God had declared was announced in the following manner. Exod. xix. 9. *And the Lord ſaid unto Moſes, Lo I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I ſpeak unto thee, and believe thee for ever.*

ever. They were themſelves to hear the voice of God from the awful appearance of a thick cloud, in order that their faith in the divine miſſion of their lawgiver, and conſequently in all the promiſes of God made by him, might be confirmed beyond the danger of any future doubt. And the extraordinary meaſure has been attended with the deſired effect, the whole Jewiſh nation having, from that time to the preſent, never entertained a doubt on the ſubject.

This extraordinary appearance of God ſpeaking to a whole nation from a thick cloud on the top of Mount Sinai, was announced three days before it took place; and their attention was kept up to it by the moſt ſolemn preparation that can be imagined; ſo that if any deception had been intended, they might have been put upon their guard. Exod. xix. 10. *And the Lord ſaid unto Moſes, Go unto the people, and ſanctify them to-day and to-morrow, for the third day the Lord will come down in the ſight of all the people, on Mount Sinai.* Directions were then given, that no

perſons whatever, except Moſes and Aaron, ſhould aſcend the Mount; and leſt any of the people ſhould preſs too near, bounds were ſet to prevent them.

After this preparation the narrative proceeds as follows. Exod. xix. 17. *And Moſes brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they ſtood at the nether part of the Mount, and Mount Sinai was altogether in a ſmoke; becauſe the Lord deſcended upon it in fire, and the ſmoke thereof aſcended as in a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.* Here it may be obſerved, that though ſmoke might be made upon the mount by perſons previouſly placed there by Moſes, the mountain could not have been made to *quake*, or *ſhake*, by any human means. Beſides, it would have been very eaſy for the people to have diſtinguiſhed a *ſmoke*, made by fire, from the thick *cloud* which enveloped the whole mountain. It may, indeed, be thought ſuſpicious, that the people ſhould not be permitted to aſcend the mount. But, certainly, there was the ſtricteſt propriety and decorum in not permitting the bulk of the people

people to preſs too near the place of the divine preſence; and this very circumſtance muſt have rendered the miracle of an audible voice from the top of the mountain more indiſputable; ſince thoſe who heard it were removed to a greater diſtance.

And when the voice of the trumpet ſounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moſes ſpake, and God anſwered him by a voice. Exod. xix. 19. What Moſes ſpake, or what God anſwered, we are not told. It was probably a ſolemn invocation on the part of Moſes, and the anſwer, whatever it was, was heard by the whole people. Theſe ſpeeches would ſerve as a gradual preparation for the great ſcene that was to follow, and would thereby put it more in the power of any ſceptical or inquiſitive perſons among them to diſcover the deception, if there had been any in the caſe.

After this God called Moſes to the top of the mount, and gave him a farther charge about the behaviour of the people. He then went down, and took his place among them, and after this, in the hearing of all the people, and in a loud articulate

voice, God delivered the ten commandments, preceded by this ſolemn introduction, *I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the houſe of bondage.* Exod. xx. 2.

The company who heard theſe words, and the ten commandments which followed them, was much greater than was neceſſary for aſcertaining the fact of diſtinct articulation. For they muſt have been more than two millions, and theſe were not near the place from which the voice iſſued, ſo that if ſpeaking trumpets had been then known, which no perſon will ſay is at all probable, it would have been impoſſible, by any natural means, to have produced ſuch an effect; and though the mere ſound of a human voice may be heard to a conſiderable diſtance, diſtinct articulation cannot be perceived very far. And beſides this articulate voice, and the ſound of a trumpet, there was thunder and lightning, and a cloud enveloping the whole mountain; and though thunder and lightning be a natural phænomenon, it was impoſſible to have foreſeen that ſuch an appearance

pearance would take place three days before hand; and certainly any thing of this tremendous kind would have interrupted, and diſconcerted, any perſons who ſhould have been placed on the mount for the purpoſe of ſpeaking to the people from thence.

This appearance was ſo awful, that the people ſeem to have removed to a conſiderable diſtance from the mountain before they heard any articulate words. For we read, Exod. xx. 18, *And all the people ſaw the thunder and the lightning, and the noiſe of the trumpet, and the mountain ſmoking; and when the people ſaw it they removed,* as they naturally would, *and ſtood afar off.* They would probably keep retiring from the mountain during the delivery of the ten commandments, which was probably very ſlow, ſo as to take up a conſiderable time; and this would make the diſtinct hearing of them much more difficult, and extraordinary.

With this clear manifeſtation of the divine preſence and power the people were fully ſatisfied, and no doubt remained upon their minds. Thus impreſſed, they ſaid unto

unto Moſes, Deut. v. 24, *Behold the Lord our God hath ſhewed us his great glory, and we have heard his voice out of the midſt of the fire. We have ſeen this day that God talketh with man and he liveth. Now therefore why ſhould we die? For this great fire will conſume us. Go thou near, and hear all the things which the Lord our God ſaith, and thou ſhalt ſpeak unto us; whatever the Lord ſhall ſay unto thee, and we will hear, and do it.*

In conſequence of this, we read, Exod. xx. 21, *The people ſtood afar off, and Moſes only drew near to the thick darkneſs where God was*; and from the communications made to him Moſes digeſted the whole ſyſtem of the Jewiſh religion and polity, which is detailed in his writings; and there was then a ſolemn acceptance of this ſyſtem, and an expreſs formal covenant between God and the people of Iſrael on the occaſion, the account of which immediately follows.

Exod. xxiv. 3. *And Moſes came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments; and all the people anſwered*

with one voice, and ſaid, All the words which the Lord hath ſaid we will do. And Moſes wrote all the words of the Lord, and roſe up early in the morning; and built an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Iſrael. And he ſent young men of the children of Iſrael who offered burnt offerings, and ſacrificed peace offerings, of oxen, unto the Lord. And Moſes took half of the blood, and put it in baſons, and half of the blood he ſprinkled on the altar, and he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people, and they ſaid, All that the Lord hath ſaid will we do, and be obedient. And Moſes took the blood, and ſprinkled it on the people, and ſaid, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you concerning all theſe words.

After this ſolemn tranſaction, Moſes was again called up to the mount, and he continued there forty days, in order to receive the particulars of the future conſtitution, and two tables of ſtone, containing the ten commandments. While he continued there, a cloud covered the mount, Exod. xxiv. 15.

15. And this cloud, called the *glory of God*, which aſſumed the appearance of darkneſs by day, and of fire by night (an appearance which no human art could counterfeit) covered the mount ſix whole days; and on the ſeventh day God called unto Moſes out of the midſt of the cloud, when we read, Exod. xxiv. 17, *And the ſight of the glory of God was like devouring fire on the top of the mount, in the eyes of the children of Iſrael, and Moſes went into the midſt of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount; and Moſes was in the mount forty days and forty nights; and when God had made an end of communing with Moſes, he gave him two tables of teſtimony, tables of ſtone, written with the finger of God.* Exod. xxxi. 18.

Thus ended this great tranſaction, the moſt important to the Iſraelitiſh nation, and eventually to the whole world, that ever was recorded. Such was the origin of that ſyſtem out of which ſprung Chriſtianity as a neceſſary conſequence, and a part, and which we Chriſtians, therefore, are equally concerned to maintain, with the Jews themſelves. The foundation of our faith

faith in this ſyſtem reſts on the miraculous events which have been recited, and their credibility muſt be eſtimated by the circumſtances of them, and eſpecially by their effects.

From the circumſtances it appears that nothing could have been deviſed to render theſe extraordinary facts leſs liable to objection; and their effects could not have been greater than they were, in ſecuring the firm belief of them in the Jewiſh nation in every period of their hiſtory, even in the times of their greateſt delinquency; and what is more, in recovering them from frequent relapſes into idolatry, to which they were exceedingly prone, but which never implied any diſbelief of the great facts on which the truth of their own religion was founded; and which has ſettled in as firm a faith as is now to be found in any part of the world, though at the diſtance of ſix thouſand years from their date; and this notwithſtanding the moſt diſcouraging ſituation poſſible, the moſt trying to men's faith and perſeverance. For ſuch is the faith of the Jews in the divine miſſion of Moſes, believing in all the promiſes

promiſes of their religion to this day, againſt every viſible ground of hope; and, among no claſs of people whatever, are there fewer unbelievers. Nominal Chriſtians are numerous, but merely nominal Jews, though there are ſome, are comparatively very few.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE V.

Of miraculous Events in the Time of Joſhua.

Now after the death of Moſes, the ſervant of the Lord, it came to paſs that the Lord ſpake unto Joſhua, the ſon of Nun, Moſes's miniſter; ſaying, Moſes my ſervant is dead, now therefore ariſe, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, unto the land which I give unto them, even to the children of Iſrael. As I was with Moſes, ſo will I be with thee.

JOSHUA i. 1—5.

HAVING conſidered the miraculous events by which the deliverance of the Iſraelites from their bondage in Egypt, and their paſſage through the wilderneſs, was diſtinguiſhed, and eſpecially thoſe by which the divine miſſion of Moſes, and the authority of his law, was confirmed, I proceed

ceed to direct your attention to thoſe which immediately preceded, and accompanied, the taking poſſeſſion of the land of Canaan, as being a part, and a continuation, of the ſame ſcheme. Of the remaining events in the life-time of Moſes, ſome indeed were miraculous, but either not being very conſpicuouſly ſo, or having only a temporary effect, I do not dwell upon them.

I muſt, however, except one miracle of a peculiar kind, by means of which the prieſthood was ſettled in the family of Aaron, ſo that there was never afterwards any complaint on this ſubject. After the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, which reſpected Aaron as well as Moſes, all the congregation complained, as if they had been the cauſe of the death of ſo many of the people; when God was pleaſed to puniſh them by a peſtilence, of which fourteen thouſand and ſeven hundred died, and a ſtop was put to it by Aaron taking incenſe, and ſtanding between the dead and the living.

This action, in which Aaron was the inſtrument, having ſo inſtantaneous an ef-

fect, ſufficiently diſtinguiſhed him as a prieſt. But in order to put the matter beyond all poſſibility of doubt in future, God ordered that the heads of every tribe ſhould deliver to Moſes a rod, with their names written upon them, and that on the rod for the tribe of Levi the name of Aaron ſhould be inſcribed. Theſe rods were laid before the ark, with an aſſurance from God, that the rod belonging to that tribe for whom the prieſthood was deſtined ſhould be found in bloſſom on the day following. Num. xvii. 5. As every tribe was intereſted in this deciſion, we cannot doubt but that ſufficient precautions were taken that there ſhould be no impoſition in the caſe, though the particulars are not mentioned. The iſſue is thus recorded: *And it came to paſs on the morrow, that Moſes went into the tabernacle of witneſs, and behold the rod of Aaron, for the houſe of Levi, was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloſſomed bloſſoms, and yielded almonds. And Moſes brought out all the rods from before the Lord, unto all the children of Iſrael, and they looked, and took every man his rod.*

And the Lord ſaid unto Moſes, Bring Aaron's rod again before the teſtimony, to be kept for a token againſt the rebels; and thou ſhalt quite take away their murmurings from me.

That there was any trick, or contrivance of Moſes, in this caſe, is improbable on this account, that it was not himſelf, or his poſterity, but Aaron, and his family, that was, in conſequence of it, honoured with the prieſthood. The children and poſterity of Moſes ranked no higher than other Levites, without any mark of diſtinction, or any advantage whatever; and he muſt have been a man different from all other men, if he had preferred the deſcendants even of his brother to his own. The ſons of Moſes are particularly mentioned, as well as thoſe of Aaron; but we are informed of nothing concerning them, beſides their names.

The remaining events in the life-time of Moſes I ſhall barely mention. During the forty years that the Iſraelites abode in the wilderneſs, it is too probable that they continued in the neighbourhood of the ſtream which firſt iſſued from the rock of Rephidim, ſo that they were ſufficiently ſupplied

plied with water. On their removing northwards to Kadeſh, the ſouthern border of the land of Canaan, the people were again diſtreſſed for want of water, when they were relieved a ſecond time by a ſtream from a rock; and on this occaſion it was that the improper conduct of Moſes and Aaron was the cauſe of their not being permitted to go over the river Jordan.

The country of the Edomites lying in their way, they aſked leave, but were refuſed, to paſs peaceably through it. They therefore made the whole circuit of their country, and came to the ſouthern border of the Amorites, on the other ſide of Jordan. But before this, having been attacked by Arad, one of the princes of the ſouthern parts of Canaan, they vowed the deſtruction of his cities; and this was afterwards accompliſhed by Joſhua. After this Aaron died, and was buried in Mount Hor, and was ſucceeded in the office of high prieſt by his ſon Eleazar.

In this going round all the land of Edom, the people being much diſtreſſed, murmured once more, and they were puniſhed

for it by fiery ſerpents, but they were relieved, when, by the particular order of God, they only looked towards a brazen ſerpent, which had been erected on a pole for that purpoſe. Thus the hand of God was conſpicuous in their relief from this calamity, as well as on every other occaſion.

The Iſraelites being now come to the borders of the Amorites, to the eaſt of the river Jordan, they aſked leave to paſs peaceably through it; but being refuſed, and oppoſed by force, they defeated them, and took poſſeſſion of their country. After this Og king of Baſhan coming in an hoſtile manner againſt them, they defeated him alſo, and taking poſſeſſion of his country, they became maſters of a very large and fertile tract on the other ſide of Jordan, bordering on the Moabites and Ammonites, the deſcendants of Lot.

Here Balak king of Moab, being jealous of the Iſraelites, but not chooſing to meet them in battle, hired Balaam a prophet to pronounce a curſe upon them, thinking that this would enſure their deſtruction.

But

But inſtead of this God was pleaſed to compel him to pronounce a bleſſing.

In this tranſaction the Midianites joined the Moabites; and the Iſraelites, continuing ſome time in their neighbourhood, were tempted to join in one of their religious feſtivals, in which, as in various acts of the heathen religion, the people indulged themſelves in the promiſcuous commerce of the ſexes. But by the zeal of Phinehas, the ſon of Eleazar, a ſtop was put to this evil. For this inſidious attempt of the Midianites to draw the Iſraelites into idolatry, war was ordered to be made upon them; the conſequence of which was the total defeat of the Midianites, and the plundering, but not the taking poſſeſſion, of their country. In this battle Balaam the prophet alſo fell, and by the judgment of God every perſon concerned in any acts of idolatry along with the Midianites, which was the worſhip of Baal Peor, died before they came to the land of Canaan. This Moſes particularly obſerved to them. Deut. iv. 3. *Your eyes have ſeen what the Lord did becauſe of Baal*

Peor. For all the men that followed Baal Peor, the Lord thy God hath deſtroyed them from among you; but ye who did cleave to the Lord your God are alive, every one of you, this day.

In the laſt years of the life of Moſes he wrote the book of Deuteronomy, conſiſting of a recapitulation of the great events which have been recited, the moſt earneſt exhortations to the people to continue firm in their allegiance to the true God, foretelling their proſperity in caſe of obedience, and the dreadful calamities that would overtake them (and they have all actually come to paſs) in caſe of their diſobedience; and laſtly in encouraging Joſhua, who ſucceeded him in the general conduct of the people. After this, not being permitted to paſs the river Jordan, he was indulged with a ſight of the promiſed land from Mount Piſgah; and there, though in full vigour, he died, or was thought ſo to do. But to me it ſeems not improbable, that, as he appeared together with Elijah, who was tranſlated into heaven without dying, on the mountain on which our Saviour was

transfigured, he had been tranſlated alſo; and is now living together with them. But where they are, or how they are employed, is, no doubt for good reaſons, unknown to us.

Moſes being dead, or tranſlated, Joſhua was appointed to ſucceed him. That this was by divine appointment is probable, becauſe it does not appear that Joſhua had any natural intereſt that could have recommended him to ſo important a ſucceſſion. He was neither of the ſame tribe with Moſes and Aaron, nor of that of Judah, to which, by the prophecy of Jacob, the preeminence was promiſed. Had Moſes himſelf had any choice in the caſe, and he had had the ſpirit of enterprize and ambition that unbelievers muſt aſcribe to him, it would, no doubt, have been in favour of his own family, or at leaſt of his own tribe.

We are now to attend to the miraculous interpoſitions of Divine Providence in the conduct of the Iſraelites under Joſhua, till their complete ſettlement in the land of Canaan. And theſe were ſufficiently remarkable,

markable, and ſuch as muſt have convinced the Iſraelites that nothing of any conſequence depended upon, or had been done by, Moſes; but that it was the power of God that had been diſplayed by him, and which was the ſame at all times.

The effect of the miracles which had been performed while the Iſraelites were under the conduct of Moſes, upon the inhabitants of Canaan, appeared when Joſhua ſent ſpies to diſcover the ſituation of the country which he was about to invade. For the woman who received theſe ſpies ſaid, Joſh. ii. 9. *I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us; and that all the inhabitants of the land faint becauſe of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up all the waters of the red ſea for you, when ye came out of Egypt, and what ye did to the two kings of the Amorites that were on the other ſide Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly deſtroyed. And as ſoon as we heard theſe things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man becauſe of you, For the Lord your God, he is God*

in heaven above, and in earth beneath. The extraordinary events here referred to reſpected other nations, and were neceſſarily known to them, but not the tranſactions at Mount Sinai, or the other events on which I have deſcanted, which were confined to the Iſraelites themſelves, and which were particularly calculated to confirm their faith in the divine miſſion of Moſes, and in the truth and importance of the civil and religious inſtitutions which he communicated to them.

The paſſage of the Iſraelites over the river Jordan was as remarkable a tranſaction as their paſſage through the red ſea, and with reſpect to its credibility, is as little liable to objection. For no natural cauſe could have made the waters of a river divide, as theſe did, ſo as to make a paſſage for ſuch a number of people, and ſo long a ſpace of time, and eſpecially when it overflowed its banks as it did, and ſtill does, in the time of harveſt, when the Iſraelites had occaſion to croſs it. Beſides this moſt wonderful event was announced three days before hand, as the miracle at Mount Sinai had

had likewiſe been, and it was attended with ſuch other peculiar circumſtances, as abundantly demonſtrates that human power, or contrivance, had nothing to do in the caſe. It will be intereſting and inſtructive to attend to theſe particulars.

After Joſhua had received his inſtructions from God, he announced the wonderful event in the following manner. Joſh. i. 11. *Then Joſhua commanded the officers of the people, ſaying, Paſs through the hoſt, command the people, ſaying, Prepare your victuals. For within three days ye ſhall paſs over this Jordan, to go in to poſſeſs the land which the Lord your God giveth you, to poſſeſs it.* This order being executed on the day before the event, *Joſhua ſaid unto the people, Sanctify yourſelves, for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you.* And Joſhua ſpake unto the prieſts, ſaying, Take up the ark of the *covenant, and paſs over before the people.*

Things being in this ſtate of readineſs, we are informed that *the Lord ſaid unto Joſhua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the ſight of all Iſrael, that they may know*

that,

that, as I was with Moſes, ſo will I be with thee. After this Joſhua, by divine direction, gave the following very particular orders, announcing every thing that was to take place; and the circumſtances and the manner in which every thing was done ſhews that there could not have been any thing like human contrivance in the caſe. A great river was to be croſſed, and yet no boats, or bridge, were provided for the purpoſe. What Joſhua ſaid was as follows:

Joſh. iii. 9. *And Joſhua ſaid unto the children of Iſrael, Come hither, and hear the words of the Lord your God. And Joſhua ſaid, Hereby ye ſhall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out before you the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Gergaſhites, and the Amorites, and the Jebuſites. Behold the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth paſſes before you into Jordan. Now therefore take ye twelve men out of the tribes of Iſrael, out of every tribe a man. And it ſhall come to paſs as ſoon as the ſoles of the feet of the prieſts that bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth,*

ſhall

ſhall reſt on the waters of the Jordan, that the waters of Jordan ſhall be cut off from the waters that come down from above, and they ſhall ſtand upon an heap. What perfect confidence does this language ſhew in the power of God, and the truth of the divine promiſe? The narrative then proceeds, and we find that every circumſtance anſwered to the prediction.

And it came to paſs when the people removed from their tents, to paſs over Jordan, and the prieſts bearing the ark of the covenant before the people; and as they that bare the ark came into Jordan, and the feet of the prieſts that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water (for Jordan overfloweth all its banks all the time of harveſt) that the waters which came down from above ſtood, and roſe up upon a heap, very far from the city Adam, that is beſide Zaretan, and thoſe that came down towards the ſea of the plain, even the ſalt ſea, failed and were cut off, and the people paſſed over right againſt Jericho. And the prieſts that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord ſtood firm on dry ground in the midſt of Jordan, and all the Iſ-

raelites

raelites paſſed over on dry ground, until all the people were paſſed clean over Jordan.

Such was this extraordinary tranſaction, of which all the people were, of courſe, witneſſes. But beſides this, meaſures were immediately taken to preſerve the memory of it to future ages. Twelve ſtones were taken out of the bed of the river, near the place where the prieſts had ſtood during the paſſing of the people, and were erected on the neighbouring ſhore.

Of theſe particulars we have the following narrative. Joſ. iv. 1. "*And it came to paſs when all the people were clean paſſed over Jordan, that the Lord ſpake unto Joſhua, ſaying, Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man, and command you them, ſaying, Take you hence out of the midſt of Jordan, out of the place where the prieſts feet ſtood firm, twelve ſtones, and you ſhall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place where you ſhall lodge this night.* This Joſhua did, ſaying, v. 5. *That this may be a ſign among you, that when your children ſhall aſk your fathers in time to come, ſaying, What mean you*

you by theſe ſtones, then ſhall ye anſwer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, when it paſſed over Jordan, that the waters of Jordan were cut off, and theſe ſtones ſhall be for a memorial to the children of Iſrael for ever.

We then read that *the children of Iſrael did ſo as Joſhua commanded, and took up twelve ſtones, out of the midſt of Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Iſrael, and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there. And Joſhua ſet up twelve ſtones in* (or perhaps rather out of) *the midſt of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the prieſts that bare the ark of the covenant ſtood, and they are there unto this day. For the prieſts who bare the ark of the covenant ſtood in the midſt of Jordan, till every thing was finiſhed which the Lord commanded Joſhua, and the people haſted and paſſed over.*

This intereſting narrative cloſes in the following manner: *And it came to paſs that when all the people were clean paſſed over,*

over, that the ark of the Lord paſſed over, and the prieſts, in the preſence of the people. And it came to paſs that when the prieſts that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord were come up out of the midſt of Jordan, and the ſoles of the prieſts feet were lifted up, unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned into their place, and flowed over all its banks, as they did before. And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the firſt month, and encamped in Gilgal, on the eaſt border of Jericho. And theſe twelve ſtones which they took out of Jordan did Joſhua pitch in Gilgal. And he ſpake unto the children of Iſrael, ſaying, When your children ſhall aſk their fathers, in time to come, ſaying, What mean theſe ſtones, then ſhall ye let your children know, ſaying, Iſrael came over this Jordan on dry land. For the Lord God dried up the waters of Jordan before you until you were paſſed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea which he dried up before us, until we were gone over; that all the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty, that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever.

You ſee how naturally, and circumſtantially, this wonderful event is related, which could only be done by an eye witneſs; and this is the fartheſt in the world from being a *traditional* account, ſuch as had paſſed through many hands before it came to the writer; and the witneſſes of the tranſaction were more than two millions of perſons.

The effect of this great event on the inhabitants of Canaan was ſuch as might have been expected; as we find, Joſh. v. *And it came to paſs when all the kings of the Amorites which were on the ſide of Jordan weſtward, and all the kings of the Canaanites which were by the ſea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Iſrael, until they were paſſed over, that their heart melted; neither was there ſpirit in them any more becauſe of the children of Iſrael.*

During this conſternation of their enemies, the Iſraelites were directed to do what would certainly have been deemed the extreme of madneſs in any other circumſtances, and which tried their faith in

the protection of God to the utmoſt. Having neglected the rite of circumciſion during their ſojourning in the wilderneſs, they were, by the expreſs order of God, all circumciſed immediately after they had paſſed the river, and were arrived in the country of their enemies, at whoſe mercy they thereby evidently were, if they had ventured to attack them; and this they naturally would have done to prevent their paſſing the river, had it been made by any natural means. Their conduct, therefore, may be conſidered as a proof that it was effected in a ſupernatural manner. The following is the ſcriptural account of this circumſtance.

Joſh. v. 2. *At that time the Lord ſaid unto Joſhua, Make thee ſharp knives, and circumciſe again the children of Iſrael, the ſecond time. And it came to paſs when they had done circumciſing all the people, that they abode in their place in the camp till they were whole.*

To commemorate this tranſaction, the place was called *Gilgal*, which ſignifies *a rolling away*, becauſe, as it is ſaid, *God*

there rolled away the reproach of Egypt from the people of Iſrael. Joſh. v. 9.

At this time alſo, inſtead of purſuing their advantage they had, in the conſternation of their enemies, as invaders naturally would have done, on the fourteenth day of the month, which was four days after the paſſage of the river, the Iſraelites had a ſolemn celebration of the paſſover. And *on the morrow after the paſſover*, we read, that *they ate of the old corn of the land*, and then the miraculous ſupply of manna wholly ceaſed. Joſh. v. 12. *And the manna ceaſed on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land, neither did the children eat manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.* This was the beginning of harveſt, and they would, of courſe, reap the fields in the neighbourhood of the camp; and before this they had not found ſufficient to ſupply ſo great a number as the nation of the Iſraelites now conſiſted of.

After theſe ſignal and numerous proofs of the preſence of God with the Iſraelites,

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we may wonder at the obſtinacy of the inhabitants of Canaan, in making any oppoſition to them. But they were appriſed that they were to be wholly exterminated, and that ſubmiſſion would avail them nothing. There were inſtances alſo of the Iſraelites having ſuſtained ſome loſs and defeat, as in their encounters with the Amalekites and king Arad, and therefore they could not tell but that circumſtances might again ariſe, in which they might combat them with ſucceſs. They did not, however, immediately advance againſt the Iſraelites, as the Amalekites and Arad had done; and as they naturally would have done, if they had not been overawed by the miraculous paſſage of the river, which (as they might learn that the Iſraelites had provided no boats or bridges) they might think a ſufficient bar to their farther progreſs. But the inhabitants of the firſt conſiderable city that lay in their way, viz. Jericho, contented themſelves with keeping within their walls, which their enemies did not appear to have any means of aſſailing.

It pleaſed God, however, to make a ſignal diſplay of his power, in reducing this ſtrongly fortified place, without the aid of any human means whatever, and in a manner peculiarly ſtriking and terrific. After the appearance of an angel, who called himſelf *the captain of the hoſt of the Lord*, to Joſhua, *the Lord ſaid unto him, See I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour*; and the manner in which this was to be effected, ſo that the Divine Power ſhould be as conſpicuous as it had been in the deſtruction of the army of Pharaoh, was thus announced to him. Joſh. vi. 3. *Ye ſhall compaſs the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus ſhall ye do ſix days. And ſeven prieſts ſhall bear before the ark ſeven trumpets of rams horns; and the ſeventh day ye ſhall compaſs the city ſeven times, and the prieſts ſhall blow with the trumpets. And it ſhall come to paſs that when they make a long blaſt with the rams horns, and when ye hear the ſound of the trumpet, all the people ſhall ſhout with a great ſhout, and the wall of the city ſhall fall down*

down flat, and the people ſhall aſcend up every man ſtraight before him.

What muſt the people of Jericho have thought during this ſolemn proceſſion, eſpecially after its continuing ſo long a time. All this was tranſacted with the greateſt punctuality; and to render the effect more ſtriking, *Joſhua commanded the people*, ſaying, *Ye ſhall not ſhout, nor make any noiſe with your voice; neither ſhall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day that I bid you ſhout. Then ſhall ye ſhout.* Accordingly, when the proper time was come, he ſaid to the people, *Shout, for the Lord hath given you the city.* During this ſhout the wall of the city fell, and, as they had been directed, every man went up ſtraight before him; and agreeably to the poſitive orders they had received on this particular occaſion, and which was never after repeated, they deſtroyed every thing they found in the place, ſparing only Rahab and her relations. They alſo *burned the city with fire, and all that was therein; only the ſilver, and the gold, and the veſſels of braſs and of iron, they put into the trea-*

ſury of the houſe of the Lord. They were ſtrictly forbidden to appropriate any thing to their own uſe, which ſhews that they were not actuated by the paſſions of other conquerors. And as they did not indulge their natural diſpoſition of *avarice*, we may well ſuppoſe they did not indulge that of *cruelty*, but conſidered themſelves as the mere executioners of the orders of heaven.

Notwithſtanding the poſitive order to deſtroy every living thing in Jericho, making the firſt fruits of their conqueſts a kind of whole burned offering to God, who gave it to them, one perſon was tempted to tranſgreſs this order, by taking, and hiding, ſome part of the ſpoil. For this the people ſuffered a partial defeat in their next attempt, which was upon a town called Ai. But the offender was diſcovered by a ſolemn lot, conducted under the immediate direction of God; and, as an example of diſobedience, he was publicly ſtoned to death.

This example would operate to deter any more of the people from diſobeying any other divine command. And the conqueſt

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of a city ſo fortified as Jericho was, and effected in the extraordinary manner that has been related, could not but ſtrike a terror into all the inhabitants of the country, and impreſs them with the idea of the ſuperiority of the God of Iſrael to their own divinities; though they had worſhipped them in the moſt expenſive manner, ſacrificing to them not only human victims in general, but frequently even their own children.

I have no occaſion to recite any farther particulars of the conqueſt of Canaan. Theſe events, of which the whole nation of the Iſraelites were witneſſes, and the hiſtory of which was committed to writing at the time, muſt have convinced them that they were under the direction of the God of nature and of the univerſe; and the well known effect of this conviction upon that nation, little diſpoſed as they were to believe any thing of the kind, viz. ſo unfavourable to that propenſity to idolatry which affected them no leſs than all other antient nations, is ſufficient to ſatisfy any perſon of reflec-

tion, and who attends to the principles of human nature, of the certainty of theſe events, which imply an actual interpoſition of Divine Providence in favour of the Iſraelitiſh nation, and furniſh a proof of the truth of that ſyſtem of revelation, which commenced with the inſtitutions of Moſes, and was completed by the miſſion of Jeſus Chriſt.

Such a firm perſuaſion in the whole Jewiſh nation, circumſtanced as they are well known to have been, on the ſuppoſition that the events above recited never took place, and that the written hiſtory of them is not authentic, would be a miracle of a much more extraordinary nature than any of thoſe that are objected to, and a miracle without any reaſonable object. For what rational end could have been anſwered by ſuch a ſupernatural infatuation (for it could not have been any thing leſs) as ſhould induce a whole nation firmly to believe all the particulars that I have recited, viz. the account of all the plagues of Egypt, their paſſing through the red ſea

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and the river Jordan, the Divine Being ſpeaking to them from Mount Sinai, and this laſt inſtance of the miraculous fall of the walls of Jericho, without any human means, and that the books containing the hiſtory of theſe particulars were written and publiſhed while the memory of the things recorded in them was recent; when, if the account had been fabulous, it muſt have been exceedingly eaſy to have expoſed it.

No nation in the world, not even the moſt credulous, (and the Jews have always been the leaſt ſo) could have been impoſed upon in ſo groſs a manner. And this was not in one particular, but in many; and thoſe on the largeſt ſcale, the fartheſt in the world from reſembling tricks of legerdemain, ſuch as may be exhibited before a few perſons in a private room. But, for the ſatisfaction of all mankind in future ages, it was requiſite that thoſe miracles, which uſhered in the firſt diſpenſation of revealed religion, ſhould be ſo circumſtanced with reſpect both to number and magnitude, as to

be out of the reach of all reaſonable objection, though not of mere cavil; and ſuch is actually the caſe. We may even venture to ſay that, had the moſt ſceptical perſon in the world been aſked, what he himſelf would wiſhed to have been done, in order to ſatisfy him that the author of Nature had really interpoſed in the government of the world, he could not have pitched upon more ſtriking things, as an evidence of it, than the ten plagues of Egypt, the paſſage of the red ſea and the river Jordan, the articulate and audible voice from Mount Sinai, pronouncing not a few words only (for in that the hearing might be deceived) but ſo many as compoſed the ten commandments, and laſtly the falling of the walls of Jericho, all of them exhibited in the preſence of a whole nation, and ſome of them even more nations than one.

In order to ſatisfy diſtant ages, that ſuch things as theſe really took place, what more could have been demanded, than that the hiſtory of them ſhould be committed to writing while the facts were recent, that ſolemn

ſolemn cuſtoms ſhould be inſtituted at the very time for the purpoſe of commemorating them; that a nation the leaſt diſpoſed to the religion which all this apparatus was provided to eſtabliſh, ſhould receive the hiſtory as genuine, and reluctantly adopt the religion thus enjoined them; and that notwithſtanding their many deviations from it, owing to the ſeductive nature of the rites of other nations, they ſhould, by their faith in this hiſtory, be brought back to the ſtrict obſervance of it, and continue in it to this day, a period of about four thouſand years.

Nothing but a due attention to this remarkable ſtate of things is neceſſary to enſure the firm belief of the whole to the moſt ſceptical of mankind. And in due time we cannot doubt but that this due attention will be given to this hiſtory, and to that of the propagation of Chriſtianity in conjunction with it; and then all mankind will of courſe become worſhippers of the God of Abraham, of Iſaac, of Jacob, and of Jeſus Chriſt; and this faith

faith cannot but be attended with a great improvement in the moral conduct of men, ſuch as will enſure to them the trueſt enjoyment of this life, and immortal happineſs in the life to come.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE VI.

General Obſervations on the Evidence of the divine Miſſion of Moſes.

Aſk now of the days that are paſt, which were before thee, ſince the day that God created man upon the earth; and aſk from the one ſide of heaven to the other, whether there have been any ſuch thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it.

DEUT. iv. 32.

HAVING conſidered pretty largely the miracles which accompanied the deliverance of the Iſraelites from their bondage in Egypt, and their ſettlement in the land of Canaan, I ſhall now, in order to diverſify theſe diſcourſes, make ſome obſervations of a more general nature, relating to the evidences of both the Jewiſh and the Chriſtian revelations, and alſo ſome particulars reſpecting Moſes himſelf.

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In the firſt place I would obſerve that the proper ground of our faith in the two revelations, by Moſes and by Chriſt, is the evidence of the miraculous events which were exhibited on two peculiarly great occaſions, and that much of the credibility of many of the ſubſequent miracles, as thoſe which occur in the hiſtory of the prophets of the Old Teſtament, and of the Apoſtles in the New, is derived from them. In any new circumſtances of things, they are the *firſt* extraordinary events that require a peculiarly ſtrong evidence, a degree of evidence proportioned to their extraordinary nature, that is, their want of analogy to preceding events; and ſuch will be found to have accompanied the miracles of Moſes and of Chriſt, eſpecially that of his reſurrection. But theſe facts being once admitted, a new analogy of facts is eſtabliſhed, in conſequence of which events ſimilar to them, as belonging to the ſame ſyſtem, will naturally be admitted on leſs circumſtantial evidence. If, for example, we had ourſelves ſeen any perſon do what was deemed extraordinary, or more than could

have

have been expected of perſons in his ſituation, we ſhould examine the facts with the greateſt rigour. But after being ſatisfied with reſpect to their evidence, we ſhould not require ſo much for a repetition of the ſame things, as the performance of others ſimilar to them, either by himſelf, or by perſons connected with him.

If therefore any perſon be ſatisfied that the miracles exhibited at the departure of the Iſraelites from Egypt, at Mount Sinai, and at their ſettlement in the land of Canaan, be credible, he will have little difficulty in admitting the truth of other miracles, which occur in the courſe of the ſame hiſtory, though, ſeparately taken, the evidence of them ſhould appear to be leſs ſatisfactory. The ſame will be the caſe with reſpect to the miracles aſcribed to Peter and Paul, after admitting thoſe of Chriſt; becauſe they would be ſuch as would be naturally expected to follow them.

Nay, the eaſy admiſſion of ſuch miracles on ſlight evidence is a kind of proof that the evidence of the preceding miracles had been

been ſatisfactory. For nothing elſe could have prepared the minds of men for the eaſy reception of the ſubſequent ones. Thus the credulity of Chriſtians after the age of the Apoſtles, and the many pretended miracles of a later period, which were received without ſufficient examination, prove that the minds of men had been prediſpoſed for their eaſy reception; and this could not have been done without ſatisfactory evidence of preceding miracles of a ſimilar nature.

In this view the ready reception of Mahometaniſm itſelf proves that the minds of men in that part of the world had been prepared for it, by having had ſatisfactory evidence of ſome preceding revelations. Otherwiſe they would have rejected his pretenſions, as moſt prepoſterous and abſurd. The credulity of mankind with reſpect to him, and other impoſtors, Chriſtians or others, is no proof of the truth of *their* pretenſions, but a ſtrong preſumption that thoſe of ſome others, who had preceded them, had been better founded.

In order, therefore, to examine the foundation

dation of any ſyſtem of religion, we ſhould attend principally to the *original miracles*, from which the credibility of all thoſe that followed was derived, and in this view thoſe of Moſes have the preference of thoſe of Chriſt; ſince the miracles of Chriſt muſt have appeared more credible in proportion to the credibility of thoſe of a ſimilar preceding diſpenſation, which he himſelf received. For a Jew, who, as ſuch, believed the divine miſſion of Moſes, would much more eaſily admit that of Chriſt, than a heathen, who had no previous faith in the divine miſſion of any perſon whatever. And for this reaſon, no doubt, it was provided, in the courſe of Divine Providence, that the Chriſtian religion ſhould be promulgated by means of a ſeries of miracles wholly unaided by thoſe by which the Jewiſh religion was eſtabliſhed, and more open to the examination of the whole world, which it reſpected. And, as I propoſe to ſhew in ſome future Diſcourſe, the miracles of Chriſt, being exhibited in a more inquiſitive age, and having been ſubjected to a peculiarly rigorous

teſt, which would enſure it the examination of both friends and enemies, Chriſtianity has advantages with reſpect to its credibility peculiar to itſelf, and even ſuperior, in ſome reſpects, to that of the miracles of Moſes. Let us, however, give the cloſeſt attention to both, whether we conſider them as connected with each other, or not.

I cannot proceed any farther without noticing the extreme abſurdity of maintaining what ſome have done, viz. that the miracles of Chriſt may be admitted, and thoſe of Moſes rejected, as if Judaiſm and Chriſtianity had no neceſſary connection; whereas they are, in fact, parts of the ſame ſcheme, and imply the truth of each other; or, though the former may not diſtinctly point to the latter, the latter is evidently built upon the former.

Chriſt and the Apoſtles were Jews, and entertained no doubt whatever of the truth of the religion in which they were educated. And can it be ſuppoſed that they ſhould have a divine miſſion themſelves, and at the ſame time be believers in what was a mere impoſture, and imagine that

what they received from God was built upon that impoſture? Such an alliance between truth and falſhood is abſolutely incredible. Thoſe who have entertained this ſtrange idea muſt have given much leſs attention to the evidence of the divine miſſion of Moſes than to that of thoſe miracles which prove that of Chriſt's, or they would not have thought ſo meanly of it.

If Chriſtianity has advantages peculiar to itſelf, with reſpect to the evidence of its truth, Judaiſm has others peculiar to itſelf, and no leſs ſtriking, eſpecially thoſe of an internal nature. For if we conſider the ſtate of the world in the time of Moſes, it muſt appear in the higheſt degree incredible, that he ſhould have attained ideas concerning God, and a Providence, ſo infinitely ſuperior to thoſe that were to be found in any of the neighbouring nations, even the moſt learned and poliſhed. Where could he have learned the truly ſublime and rational idea of one God, and the purity of his worſhip, when all other nations were addicted to idolatry, and the moſt

horrid vices in the worſhip of their ſeveral deities? How came the Jewiſh religion to have nothing in it of omens, auguries, charms, and numberleſs ſuch ſuperſtitious obſervances as thoſe of which the whole of the religion of the Heathens (not excepting that of the Greeks and Romans) conſiſted? How came the Jewiſh religion to come in aid of the pureſt morality, when that of all their neighbours encouraged alike the groſſeſt ſenſuality and cruelty? Among them we find the moſt ſhocking indecencies committed in the very temples, and among all of them we find human ſacrifices. And theſe were things of which the Jewiſh lawgiver expreſſed the greateſt abhorrence; and in all other reſpects the Jews were certainly not more enlightened, or more civilized, than their neighbours. This great difference cannot be accounted for but by ſuppoſing that the Jews were *taught of God*, while other nations had been left to their *vain imaginations*; fancying that their affairs were ſubject to the influence of the ſun, moon, and ſtars, and other imaginary cauſes of good and evil,

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and having recourſe to the moſt ridiculous rites in order to avert the indignation, and conciliate the favour, of thoſe imaginary powers.

With reſpect to the immediate effect of the miracles of Moſes and thoſe of Chriſt, it is to be obſerved that the former gained the entire and firm aſſent of the whole nation of the Iſraelites, whereas the latter convinced only a part of them. But in the former caſe there was no previous principle of unbelief operating to counteract their effect. It was nothing but the hopeleſs ſtate of their affairs that made the Iſraelites diſtruſt the divine miſſion of Moſes, the firſt object of which was their deliverance from their bondage in Egypt; but when this was actually effected, in the manner that Moſes predicted, and entirely without their concurrence, nothing remained but a joyful acquieſence in what they themſelves ſaw, and could not but ſee, that God had done for them.

On the other hand, Jeſus found the whole nation of the Jews poſſeſſed of a firm belief in a temporal deliverer, and

the firmeſt perſuaſion concerning the truth of their prophecies. It is not much to be wondered at therefore that they could not be made to believe, even on the evidence of miracles, that any other than a king could be their promiſed Meſſiah; ſo that their faith in Moſes and their other prophets operated to prevent their receiving Jeſus in the ſame character. Their worldly ambition alſo would tend to confirm them in their prejudices againſt the pretenſions of Jeſus.

However the purpoſes of God were equally anſwered by the univerſal belief of the Jews in the divine miſſion of Moſes, and their partial belief in that of Jeſus. In the former caſe it was neceſſary that the whole nation ſhould form itſelf into a peculiar ſyſtem of government, of which God himſelf was to be the head; and this could not have been effected without the concurrence of the nation, and conſequently without their being ſatisfied with reſpect to the authority which enjoined that ſyſtem. But the object of Chriſtianity was not national, having no more reſpect to the

Jews

Jews than to other people, and therefore it required of the Jews of that age only ſuch a perſuaſion of the truth of the facts, eſpecially that of the reſurrection of Jeſus, as ſhould enſure the general and univerſal belief of it in future ages, and to the end of the world. And this object could not, as I ſhall ſhew, have been attained, if the great body of the Jewiſh nation, and eſpecially the governing perſons in it, had immediately become Chriſtians.

The Jewiſh and Chriſtian diſpenſations were ſimilar to each other with reſpect to the teſt that their evidences were put to, in conſequence of the oppoſition that was made to them. No facts, as I ſhall ſhew, were ever ſubjected to ſo rigorous a ſcrutiny as thoſe on which the divine miſſion of Jeſus reſted, by means of the umbrage that was taken at it by all the powers of the world, in the age in which it was promulgated, and the conſequent perſecution of his followers. The divine miſſion and authority of Moſes were alſo tried in a very rigorous manner by the oppoſition that was made to him, and nothing could have overcome that

oppoſition but the moſt overbearing evidence that God was with him.

Moſes having tarried on Mount Sinai forty days, when the people had no expectation of any ſuch thing, and they knew that he had no ſuſtenance, concluded (and not very unnaturally) that they ſhould ſee no more of him. Exod. xxxii. 1, &c. *And when the people ſaw that Moſes delayed to come down out of the mount, they gathered themſelves together unto Aaron, and ſaid unto him, Up, make us Gods, that ſhall go before us; for as for this Moſes, the man that brought us out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him.* They had no doubt of the reality of what they had ſeen in proof of their having been hitherto conducted by God and Moſes, but they haſtily concluded, as they had done before, that they were deſerted, and therefore thought that they muſt do the beſt they could for themſelves. And having no ſyſtem of worſhip as yet eſtabliſhed, and thinking, with all other people, that nothing was to be done without one, they reverted to ſuch rites as they had been uſed to, but ſtill in honour, as they

they thought, of their own God. For when Aaron complied with their wiſhes, and made the golden calf, in direct violation, no doubt, of the ſecond commandment (but which had not then been committed to writing, or particularly explained to them) he made proclamation, and ſaid, *To-morrow is a feaſt to Jehovah.*

No ſooner, however, did Moſes make his appearance than the whole buſineſs ceaſed, and by his order the Levites alone went through the camp, and, without meeting with any oppoſition, made an indiſcriminate ſlaughter of three thouſand men. Could this have taken place by the order of a ſingle man, if the people had not had the fulleſt perſuaſion from what had paſſed that he was commiſſioned by God, and that all reſiſtance would have been vain?

On this occaſion Moſes had an opportunity of ſhewing his unambitious nature, and the piety and generoſity of his ſentiments. For when, in order to try him, God propoſed to deſtroy the Iſraelites, and to make of him a great nation, Exod.

xxxii. 10. he interceded for the people in the following truly noble manner. *And Moſes beſought the Lord his God, and ſaid unto the Lord, Why does thy wrath wax hot againſt thy people, whom thou haſt brought forth out of the land of Egypt, with great power and with a mighty hand? Wherefore ſhould the Egyptians ſpeak, and ſay, For miſchief did he bring them out to ſlay them in the mountains, and to conſume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce anger, and repent of this evil againſt thy people. Remember Abraham, Iſaac, and Iſrael thy ſervants, to whom thou ſwareſt by thine own ſelf, and ſaidſt unto them, I will multiply your ſeed as the ſtars of heaven; and all this land that I have ſpoken of will I give unto your ſeed, and they ſhall inherit it for ever.* Thus ended this remarkable tranſaction, diſgraceful, indeed, to the Iſraelites, but highly favourable to the evidence of the divine miſſion of Moſes, and the truth of their religion.

If there had been any *ſecret* in the miracles of Moſes, it muſt have been known to Aaron, who was always employed as the

the inſtrument of them, by waving his rod, as the ſignal when they were to take place; and this ſecret would probably have been diſcovered when he and their ſiſter Miriam complained of the ſuperiority which he aſſumed over them, though he was the younger brother, and had married a ſtranger; which in their opinion degraded him. Numb. xii. 1. *And Miriam and Aaron ſpake againſt Moſes, becauſe of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married. And they ſaid, Hath the Lord indeed ſpoken only by Moſes, and hath he not ſpoken alſo by us?* This diſcontent, however, implied no doubt of the divine interpoſition in favour of the nation, but only a diſſatisfaction at the preeminence of Moſes, as the chief inſtrument of it. However, notwithſtanding the diſadvantage of Moſes in the reſpects above mentioned, and his own unambitious nature, the conteſt was ſoon decided in his favour by the interpoſition of God himſelf, and both Aaron and all the people were ſatisfied.

At the report of the ſpies who were ſent to explore the land of Canaan, all the peo-

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ple were diſheartened, and ready to go back to Egypt. But Moſes, ſo far from doing any thing to ſooth and pacify them, aſſured them that, on account of this diſtruſt of the power and promiſe of God, they would be detained forty years in the wilderneſs, and that not one of them who had murmured would be permitted to ſee the promiſed land. This reproach inſtigated them to make a raſh attempt to enter the country, but when that proved unſucceſsful, as Moſes had foretold, they were far from executing their purpoſe of returning into Egypt; and being fully ſatisfied with reſpect to the divine power that accompanied Moſes, and which had conducted them hitherto, they ſubmitted to this hard ſentence, obeyed his orders as before, and continued to live a wandering life in the wilderneſs the whole of the forty years, without making any more attempts, either to return to Egypt, or to invade Canaan prematurely. What greater proof can be required of this refractory people being convinced that God was with Moſes, and that by him he conducted them?

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The rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, by far the moſt formidable that Moſes ever encountered, implied no diſſatisfaction with reſpect to their being guided by the hand of God, but only with the pre-eminence of Moſes and Aaron. For we read, Num. xvi. 3. *And they gathered themſelves together againſt Moſes and againſt Aaron, and ſaid unto them, Ye take too much upon you, ſeeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Wherefore then lift ye yourſelves up above the congregation of the Lord?* This rebellion, however, was ſoon terminated in the moſt awful manner, the earth opening and ſwallowing up theſe complainers with every thing belonging to them, as was previouſly announced by Moſes, and we hear no more complaints of the kind. The meaſure may appear harſh, but it was neceſſary that the authority of Moſes ſhould be thoroughly eſtabliſhed.

It is not neceſſary for me to vindicate the conduct of God with reſpect to the Iſraelites, or to the world at large, though I ſhall hereafter make ſome obſervations on this

this ſubject; my principal object in this Diſcourſe being to illuſtrate the proof of his actual interpoſition. And certainly there cannot be any clearer evidence of it than the opening of the earth at the word of a man.

But we may be ſatisfied that whatever the author of Nature does, it will appear to be ultimately right, however it may appear to us at preſent. It is in the hand of the ſame Being who conducted the Iſraelites that we ourſelves, and all our concerns, neceſſarily are. It is, therefore, our buſineſs to accommodate ourſelves to his will, and acquieſce in his proceedings, unleſs we think that we can better our condition by complaining.

Among other internal evidences of the fidelity and truth of the Moſaic hiſtory, is the excellent character, which, from an attention to the narrative only, we cannot help forming of Moſes. That encomium upon him, Num: xii. 3. *Now the man Moſes was very meek above all the men that were on the face of the earth*, was evidently the remark of ſome other perſon, afterwards

wards inſerted in the text; having no proper connexion with any thing that goes before, or that follows it. But we every where ſee the greateſt piety, the ſtrongeſt affection for the people at the head of whom he was unwillingly placed, and whoſe perverſeneſs was almoſt intolerable, and what is more, as ſimple an account of his own failings, as of thoſe of the people, without any attempt to palliate them.

Of this we have a moſt remarkable inſtance in his impatience, to ſay the leaſt, in ſtriking the rock at the ſecond time of producing water in this way, and in his acquieſence in the puniſhment of his offence, which was nothing leſs than his not being permitted to ſee his countrymen ſettled in the promiſed land, though it is evident from his earneſt prayer afterwards, that it was the firſt wiſh of his heart ſo to do.

From what conceivable motive could an impoſtor have invented ſuch a ſtory as this? Alſo if the people had been at his diſpoſal, what reaſon could he have had for detaining them ſo long in the wilderneſs? With the greateſt

greateſt eaſe they had taken poſſeſſion of all the country to the weſt of the river Jordan; and to all appearance they were as well prepared to paſs the river immediately after, while the terror of their arms was freſh in the minds of the people of Canaan, as at any time afterwards; and Moſes, though in years, was in his full vigour. Nay, to all appearance, the people were as well prepared for this important expedition preſently after their departure from Egypt, and eſpecially after their paſſage of the red ſea, as at any time afterwards; and the hiſtory of their attempt at Kadeſh ſhews that they had as much ſpirit for the enterprize. But their impetuoſity was reſtrained till, according to all natural probability, their ſpirits would be broken, they would have acquired the tame life of the wandering Arabs, and have been utterly unable to contend with a people who lived in fenced cities, and who, being apprized of the enterprize, would have had abundant time for taking their meaſures to repel the invaſion. Deſirous as the people, and, no doubt, Moſes himſelf muſt have

have been, to take poſſeſſion of the country for the ſake of which they had left Egypt, what could have reſtrained them ſo long, but the beſt grounded perſuaſion of a divine command for that purpoſe. Admitting this, the whole hiſtory is perfectly natural, and certainly moſt inſtructive; but on any other ſuppoſition the moſt unnatural that ever was written.

To an attentive reader there needs no other evidence of the authenticity of the books of Moſes than the manner in which they are written, eſpecially his moſt earneſt and affectionate addreſs to the people before his death, contained in the book of Deuteronomy, in which he conſtantly appeals to the people with reſpect to what themſelves had ſeen and heard, and makes the moſt natural obſervations upon it. I ſhould think it barely poſſible for any perſon to read only that book through with attention, and remain an unbeliever in the great events alluded to in it, and related more at length in the preceding books. There is no where extant, ſince the art of writing was known, and ſince the art

has been moſt improved, a mode of addreſs more expreſſive of genuine and excellent ſentiments than what we find in this, the oldeſt of all writers. With this view, and for the ſake of the valuable inſtruction which it affords, I ſhall ſubjoin to this Diſcourſe a conſiderable part of the fourth Chapter, and alſo ſome other paſſages relating to the bleſſings which would attend their obedience, and the curſes which would follow their diſobedience.

Before I cloſe this ſubject, it may not be improper to make an obſervation or two on the conduct of the Divine Being in theſe tranſactions, in order to give what ſatisfaction I may be able to thoſe who find a difficulty with reſpect to the propriety and juſtice of ſome parts of it.

We are told in our tranſlation, that the Iſraelites were directed by God himſelf to *borrow* of the Egyptians veſſels of ſilver, veſſels of gold, and other valuable things, before their departure, when there was no deſign to reſtore the things borrowed; and therefore that he authorized a fraudu-

lent tranſaction. But in the original it is ſimply they *aſked*, or perhaps *demanded*, of the Egyptians the things that they took, which does not imply any intention of returning them; and if the quantity and value were very great, as they probably were, the Egyptians could not be eaſily made to believe that they wanted them all for the purpoſe of ſacrificing, which was the original pretence for aſking leave to go out of the country. In the terror the Egyptians were now in, fearing, as we read, *leſt they ſhould all be dead men*, they ſeem to have wiſhed to get rid of them at any rate, and to have been willing to give them any thing that they demanded as a preſent at their departure, which, it is to be obſerved, is agreeable to the oriental cuſtoms. And certainly after, at leaſt, a hundred years of hard ſervitude, it cannot be ſuppoſed that they got in this way more than they were fairly entitled to; ſo that there was no real injuſtice in the caſe, and there is no objection except in the manner in which they took what really belonged to them.

Again, it is ſaid to be unreaſonable for God to harden the heart of Pharaoh, as he is ſaid to have done, in order to give occaſion for the extraordinary diſplays of miracles of which I have given an account. He is even ſaid to have raiſed him up for this very purpoſe. But this is nothing more than the uſual phraſeology of ſcripture, according to which every thing is immediately aſcribed to God that takes place in the general plan of Providence, of which he is, in a proper ſenſe, indeed, but only ultimately, the author.

Thus, when David heard Shimei curſe him, he ſaid, *Let him curſe, for God has bidden him curſe.* Not that Shimei had received any order from God to curſe David, or that David thought ſo when he made uſe of the language; but that it was righteous in God to permit him ſo to do. So alſo Joſeph ſaid that *God had ſent him into Egypt*, when he well knew that he was ſent thither by the wicked devices of his brethren. But his going thither was an event of which Providence, as it were, availed itſelf, for the beſt of purpoſes.

The ſame was the caſe with reſpect to Pharaoh. He was naturally, as we ſay, an obſtinate man, and long perſiſted in his reſolution to detain the Iſraelites in ſubjection to him; and the Divine Being made uſe of this diſpoſition of his to give ſuch a manifeſt diſplay of his power, as anſwered the moſt important purpoſes in that age, and to the preſent time. And we have inſtances in hiſtory, and in common life, of obſtinacy equal to that of Pharaoh. That of the Scribes and Phariſees in our Saviour's time was not ſhort of it, and equally ſubſervient to the deſigns of Providence.

That there was nothing ſupernatural in the hardening of the heart of Pharaoh, but that his conduct aroſe from his own natural and blameable obſtinacy, and that his caſe was thus generally underſtood, appears from what the Philiſtines ſay to one another when they were conſulting about ſending back the ark of God, which had been taken; when inſtead of furniſhing them with a permanent cauſe of triumph, they found themſelves grievouſly incommoded by it. 1 Sam. vi. 6. *Wherefore, then, do*

ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians, and Pharaoh, hardened their hearts, when he had wrought wonderfully among them? Did they not let the people go, and they departed.

I would farther obſerve with reſpect to theſe objections, and alſo to that from the deſtruction of the Canaanites, and other violations of the common rules of moral conduct among men, that what we call *evil*, natural and moral, is continually employed in the courſe of Divine Providence as the means of producing *good*, and that there can be no juſt objection to this in the conduct of any being, provided all the conſequences of things could be foreſeen and attended to, as they are by the Supreme Being. The reaſon why our choice of means to gain the ſame good end is limited by the uſual rules of morality, is the imperfection of our knowledge. On this account, the rule of our conduct is in many caſes different from that of God's. We muſt not *do evil that good may come*, becauſe we cannot be ſure that good *will* come of it. But in this foreſight, as well as in every thing elſe, God is infallible. He

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ſees the end from the beginning, and therefore in his conduct the introduction of partial evil may have the beſt effect.

We are not to expect that the author of revelation ſhould be any other Being than the author of Nature, or that he ſhould conduct himſelf by any other rules. And he who often deſtroys whole cities and countries by means of earthquakes, and other natural cauſes, might chooſe to effect the deſtruction of the Canaanites by the ſword of the children of Iſrael. And there was this obvious reaſon for it, that by expreſsly commiſſioning them to effect this extirpation, he ſignified in the leaſt equivocal manner his diſpleaſure at the conduct of the inhabitants of this country, for their abominable idolatrous practices, as a warning to the Iſraelites, who were to be a people devoted to his ſole worſhip, for the inſtruction of all mankind.

Laſtly, Though the hiſtory of the deliverance of the Iſraelites from their ſtate of bondage in Egypt, and their ſettlement in the land of Canaan, be an extraordinary one, abounding with miraculous events,

which require a proportionally clear evidence, we have ſeen that the evidence of the facts is as full and clear as the caſe, or as any caſe, can require; and the object of the whole ſcheme to which theſe events were an introduction, was of proportional importance. It was nothing leſs than to impreſs upon mankind the belief of the exiſtence and providence of the one true God, the purity of his worſhip, the knowledge of our moral duty in this life, and of our expectations in another. For this great purpoſe it pleaſed God to make one nation the medium of all his communications with mankind, and to diſtinguiſh them by a particular providence, that they might appear in the moſt conſpicuous light to the whole world, and attract univerſal attention. This the nation of the Jews has done to a conſiderable degree in all ages. Originally they were ſituated in the very centre of all the civilized nations of the world, and as civilization extended, they by one means or another became moſt wonderfully diſperſed through all countries; and at this day they are almoſt literally every where,

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the moſt conſpicuous, and in the eye of reaſon and religion, the moſt reſpectable, nation on the face of the earth.

It has been by means of prophets of this nation, and eſpecially Jeſus Chriſt, that the world has been recovered, as far as this recovery has taken place, from the deplorable ſtate of ſuperſtition and idolatry into which it was univerſally ſunk. This nation had originally as much to learn concerning God, a Providence, and a future ſtate, as any other, and they had not naturally any better ſources of information; but having been *taught of God*, they, or their diſciples, are the inſtructors of all the world; and the leſſons they give us are equally inſtructive, whether they themſelves have ſuffered for their diſobedience, or flouriſhed in conſequence of their obedience. And the moſt important and convincing of all the leſſons they are deſtined to give the world, what we have reaſon to believe will put an end to all infidelity, will be the reſult of their promiſed reſtoration to their preſent deſolated country, from their preſent miſerable, deſpiſed, and diſperſed

diſperſed condition. For who but he, who alone can ſee into futurity, could foreſee an event ſo diſtant and ſo complicated? And as their diſperſion and preſervation correſpond, as I ſhall ſhew in a future Diſcourſe, with ſuch wonderful exactneſs to antient prophecies, there is no reaſonable cauſe of doubt but that their reſtoration and future flouriſhing ſtate will correſpond to the many predictions concerning it with equal exactneſs. With thoſe who, for want of attention (for it cannot be owing to any thing elſe) are unbelievers at preſent, the iſſue of the whole muſt reſt on this future event, which cannot fail to arreſt, and moſt forcibly engage, the attention of all mankind.

DEUT. i. 1.

THESE be the words which Moſes ſpake unto all Iſrael on this ſide Jordan, in the wilderneſs, in the plain over againſt the Red Sea, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab.

DEUT. iv. 1—40.

Now therefore hearken, O Iſrael, unto the ſtatutes, and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and poſſeſs the land which the Lord God of your fathers giveth you. Ye ſhall not add unto the word which I command you, neither ſhall ye diminiſh ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you. Your eyes have ſeen what the Lord did becauſe of Baal-peor: for all the men that followed Baal-peor, the Lord thy God hath deſtroyed them from among you. But ye that did cleave unto the Lord your God are alive every one of you this day. Behold, I have taught you ſtatutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye ſhould do ſo in the land whither ye go to poſſeſs it. Keep therefore, and do them; for this is your wiſdom and your underſtanding in the ſight of the nations, which ſhall hear all theſe ſtatutes, and ſay, Surely this great nation is a wiſe and underſtanding people. For what nation is there ſo great, who hath God ſo nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there ſo great, that hath ſtatutes and judgments

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ſo righteous, as all this law which I ſet before you this day? Only take heed to thyſelf, and keep thy ſoul diligently, leſt thou forget the things which thine eyes have ſeen, and leſt they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but teach them thy ſons, and thy ſons' ſons: Specially the day that thou ſtoodeſt before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord ſaid unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they ſhall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children. And ye came near, and ſtood under the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire unto the midſt of heaven, with darkneſs, clouds, and thick darkneſs. And the Lord ſpake unto you out of the midſt of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but ſaw no ſimilitude; only ye heard a voice. And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of ſtone.

And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you ſtatutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to poſſeſs it. Take ye therefore good heed unto yourſelves, (for ye ſaw no manner of ſimilitude on the day that the Lord ſpake unto you in Horeb out of the midſt of the fire,) Leſt ye corrupt yourſelves, and make you a graven image, the ſimilitude of any figure, the likeneſs of male or female; The likeneſs of any beaſt that is on the earth, the likeneſs of any winged fowl that flieth in the air; The likeneſs of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeneſs of any fiſh that is in the waters beneath the earth: And leſt thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou

thou ſeeſt the ſun, and the moon, and the ſtars, even all the hoſt of heaven, ſhouldeſt be driven to worſhip them, and ſerve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven. But the Lord hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day. Furthermore the Lord was angry with me for your ſakes, and ſware that I ſhould not go over Jordan, and that I ſhould not go in unto that good land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance. But I muſt die in this land, I muſt not go over Jordan: but ye ſhall go over, and poſſeſs that good land. Take heed unto yourſelves, leſt ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeneſs of any thing which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee. For the Lord thy God is a conſuming fire, even a jealous God.

When thou ſhalt beget children, and children's children, and ſhalt have remained long in the land, and ſhall corrupt yourſelves, and make a graven image, or the likeneſs of any thing, and ſhall do evil in the ſight of the Lord thy God, to provoke him to anger; I call heaven and earth to witneſs againſt you this day, that ye ſhall ſoon utterly periſh from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to poſſeſs it; ye ſhall not prolong your days upon it, but ſhall utterly be deſtroyed. And the Lord ſhall ſcatter you among the nations, and ye ſhall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the Lord ſhall lead you. And there ye ſhall ſerve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and ſtone, which neither ſee, nor hear, nor eat, nor ſmell. But if from thence thou

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ſhalt ſeek the Lord thy God, thou ſhalt find him, if thou ſeek him with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul. When thou art in tribulation, and all theſe things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and ſhalt be obedient unto his voice, (For the Lord thy God is a merciful God,) he will not forſake thee, neither deſtroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers, which he ſware unto them. For aſk now of the days that are paſt, which were before thee ſince the day that God created man upon the earth, and aſk from the one ſide of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any ſuch thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God ſpeaking out of the midſt of the fire, as thou haſt heard, and live? Or hath God aſſayed to go and take him a nation from the midſt of another nation, by temptations, by ſigns, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a ſtretched-out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? Unto thee it was ſhewed, that thou mighteſt know that the Lord he is God; there is none elſe beſides him. Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might inſtruct thee; and upon earth he ſhewed thee his great fire, and thou heardeſt his words out of the midſt of the fire. And becauſe he loved thy fathers, therefore he choſe their ſeed after them, and brought thee out in his ſight with his mighty power out of Egypt; To drive out nations from before thee, greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day. Know therefore this day, and conſider it in thine heart,

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that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none elſe. Thou ſhalt keep therefore his ſtatutes and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayeſt prolong thy days upon the earth, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, for ever.

DEUT. vi. 1—25.

Now theſe are the commandments, the ſtatutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to poſſeſs it: That thou mighteſt fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his ſtatutes, and his commandments, which I command thee; thou, and thy ſon, and thy ſon's ſon, all the days of thy life, and that thy days may be prolonged.

Hear, therefore, O Iſrael, and obſerve to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increaſe mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promiſed thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. Hear, O Iſrael; the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy might. And theſe words, which I command thee this day, ſhall be in thine heart. And thou ſhalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and ſhalt talk of them when thou ſitteſt in thine houſe, and when thou walkeſt by the way, and when thou lieſt down, and when thou riſeſt up. And thou ſhalt bind them for a ſign upon thine hand, and they ſhall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou ſhalt write them upon the poſts of thy houſe, and

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on thy gates. And it ſhall be, when the Lord thy God ſhall have brought thee into the land which he ſware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Iſaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities which thou buildeſt not, And houſes full of all good things which thou filledſt not, and wells digged which thou diggedſt not, vineyards and olive-trees which thou plantedſt not; when thou ſhalt have eaten and be full; Then beware leſt thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the houſe of bondage. Thou ſhalt fear the Lord thy God, and ſerve him, and ſhalt ſwear by his name. Ye ſhall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you; (For the Lord thy God is a jealous God among you;) leſt the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled againſt thee, and deſtroy thee from off the face of the earth.

Ye ſhall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted him in Maſſah. Ye ſhall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and his teſtimonies, and his ſtatutes, which he hath commanded thee. And thou ſhalt do that which is right and good in the ſight of the Lord; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayeſt go in and poſſeſs the good land which the Lord ſware unto thy fathers; To caſt out all thine enemies from before thee, as the Lord hath ſpoken. And when thy ſon aſketh thee in time to come, ſaying, What mean the teſtimonies, and the ſtatutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? Then thou ſhalt ſay unto thy ſon, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. And the Lord ſhewed ſigns and wonders,

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great and ſore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his houſhold, before our eyes: And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he ſware unto our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all theſe ſtatutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preſerve us alive, as it is at this day. And it ſhall be our righteouſneſs, if we obſerve to do all theſe commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us.

DEUT. vii. 1—26.

When the Lord thy God ſhall bring thee into the land whither thou goeſt to poſſeſs it, and hath caſt out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgaſhites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebuſites, ſeven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the Lord thy God ſhall deliver them before thee, thou ſhalt ſmite them, and utterly deſtroy them; thou ſhalt make no covenant with them, nor ſhew mercy unto them; Neither ſhalt thou make marriages with them: thy daughter thou ſhalt not give unto his ſon, nor his daughter ſhalt thou take unto thy ſon. For they will turn away thy ſon from following me, that they may ſerve other gods: ſo will the anger of the Lord be kindled againſt you, and deſtroy thee ſuddenly. But thus ſhall ye deal with them; ye ſhall deſtroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath choſen thee to be a ſpecial people unto himſelf, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

The Lord did not ſet his love upon you, nor chooſe you, becauſe ye were more in number than any people; (for ye were the feweſt of all people;) But becauſe the Lord loved you, and becauſe he would keep the oath which he had ſworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the houſe of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know, therefore, that the Lord thy God he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him, and keep his commandments, to a thouſand generations; And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to deſtroy them: he will not be ſlack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face. Thou ſhalt therefore keep the commandments, and the ſtatutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them.

Wherefore it ſhall come to paſs, if ye hearken to theſe judgments, and keep and do them, that the Lord thy God ſhall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he ſware unto thy fathers. And he will love thee, and bleſs thee, and multiply thee: he will alſo bleſs the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increaſe of thy kine, and the flocks of thy ſheep, in the land which he ſware unto thy fathers to give thee. Thou ſhalt be bleſſed above all people: there ſhall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. And the Lord will take away from thee all ſickneſs, and will put none of the evil diſeaſes of Egypt, which thou knoweſt, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee. And thou ſhalt conſume all the people which the Lord thy God ſhall deliver thee; thine

thine eye ſhall have no pity upon them; neither ſhalt thou ſerve their gods; for that will be a ſnare unto thee. If thou ſhalt ſay in thine heart, Theſe nations are more than I, how can I diſpoſſeſs them? Thou ſhalt not be afraid of them; but ſhalt well remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt: The great temptations which thine eyes ſaw, and the ſigns, and the wonders, and the mighty hand, and the ſtretched-out arm, whereby the Lord thy God brought thee out; ſo ſhall the Lord thy God do unto all the people of whom thou art afraid. Moreover the Lord thy God will ſend the hornet among them, until they that are left, and hide themſelves from thee, be deſtroyed. Thou ſhalt not be affrighted at them: for the Lord thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible. And the Lord thy God will put out thoſe nations before thee by little and little: thou mayeſt not conſume them at once, leſt the beaſts of the field increaſe upon thee. But the Lord thy God ſhall deliver them unto thee, and ſhall deſtroy them with a mighty deſtruction, until they be deſtroyed. And he ſhall deliver their kings into thine hand, and thou ſhalt deſtroy their name from under heaven: there ſhall no man be able to ſtand before thee, until thou have deſtroyed them. The graven images of their gods ſhall ye burn with fire; thou ſhalt not deſire the ſilver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, leſt thou be ſnared therein: for it is an abomination to the Lord thy God. Neither ſhalt thou bring an abomination into thine houſe, leſt thou be a curſed thing like it: but thou ſhalt utterly deteſt it, and thou ſhalt utterly abhor it; for it is a curſed thing.

DISCOURSE VII.

Of the miraculous Events from the Time of Joſhua to the Babyloniſh Captivity.

He eſtabliſhed a teſtimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Iſrael, which he commanded to our fathers, that they ſhould make them known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, even the children which ſhould be born; who ſhould ariſe, and declare them to their children, that they might ſet their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.

PSALM lxxviii. 5, 6, 7.

IN the preceding Diſcourſes I laid before you the evidence of the divine miſſion of Moſes, and the credibility of the miraculous events which accompanied the deliverance of the Iſraelites from their bondage in

Egypt, and their ſettlement in the land of Canaan. Theſe miracles were ſtrictly connected with the promulgation of a ſyſtem of religion eſſentially different from any that prevailed in the world at that time, and infinitely ſuperior to them all; conſiſting in the worſhip of the one true God, the maker of heaven and earth, and the ſupreme diſpoſer of all events; a religion which admitted into its rites nothing impure or cruel, and which was eminently ſubſervient to the practice of moral virtue. It was a religion free from the abſurd, but then univerſally prevalent, arts of divination, magic, and necromancy; but which ſupplied the people from time to time with real prophets, who announced to them the will of God, and occaſionally foretold things to come.

By this means the Iſraelites were for ever prevented from wholly abandoning their religion, though, deceived by the ſame fallacious appearances which led the reſt of the world into the worſhip of a multiplicity of deities, and faſcinated by the licentious rites of their religions, the ma-

jority of the nation frequently conformed to the worſhip of their heathen neighbours. It by no means appears that the nation in general ever diſbelieved the miraculous events recorded in the books of Moſes, or the ſupreme divinity of the God of their fathers; but they were willing to think that, conſiſtently with this, they might be indulged in the worſhip of inferior deities, and derive both pleaſure and advantage from the rites to which all the great nations around them were addicted. After any general or long continued neglect of their religion, they were, in a courſe of an extraordinary providence, brought back to it by ſevere judgments. But the ſame influence which deceived the reſt of the world in time affected them as before, till the long captivity in Babylon, and what they had an opportunity of obſerving there, effectually cured them of all proneneſs to idolatry.

Some think theſe relapſes of the Iſraelites into idolatry, after the many miracles to which their anceſtors had been witneſſes, abſolutely incredible. But it ſhould

be

be conſidered, that this defection to idolatry, to which they had been addicted in Egypt, did not take place till after the death of Joſhua and his cotemporaries, that is, while the miraculous events were recent; and that the Iſraelites did not, in general, do more than join the worſhip of other Gods to that of their own. Alſo, whatever they might have been taught by Moſes, or independently of him, concerning a future ſtate, the proper object of his inſtitutions was temporal proſperity; and they ſaw other nations flouriſhing notwithſtanding their idolatry. They might, therefore, cheriſh the hope that proſperity was not neceſſarily connected with the obſervance of their peculiar inſtitutions, eſpecially as their calamity did not follow their defection very ſpeedily, but by ſlow degrees.

Do not many Chriſtians think, and act, much in the ſame manner? How many real believers in Chriſtianity indulge themſelves in practices which they know to be forbidden by it, either with the ſecret hope of after repentance, or willing to think that

their favourite indulgences are not abſolutely forbidden, or with ſome other excuſe for them? How many unbelievers do things which they know to be contrary to that *reaſon* which they put in the place of *religion?* Let not theſe perſons, then, greatly condemn the Iſraelites, or conclude their conduct to be abſolutely unaccountable, and their hiſtory, for this reaſon, incredible.

Theſe frequent relapſes into idolatry, notwithſtanding the calamities they never failed to bring upon the Iſraelitiſh nation, is a clear proof that they had no natural attachment to the religion inſtituted by Moſes. Though ſo excellent, it was by no means the religion of their choice, but one that was forced upon them, by evidence which it was not in their power to reſiſt. For what hindered their continuing to worſhip the gods of their neighbours, to which they were ſo very prone, as all other nations did, but ſome particular providence, accompanied with miraculous appearances peculiar to themſelves? This is a conſideration of the greateſt importance

to

to the credibility of the miraculous part of their hiſtory; as, in fact, the miracles were conſtantly exhibited not before friends, but enemies, that is, perſons prejudiced againſt the object of them.

The hiſtory of the Iſraelites ſhews that this nation was never long without ſome miraculous appearances, all of which were, no doubt, directly or indirectly, calculated to confirm them in the belief of the truth, and divine origin, of their religion. But the firſt miracle that occurs, which was more particularly calculated to demonſtrate the ſuperiority of their God to thoſe of their neighbours, was the fall of the ſtatue of Dagon before the ark, and the judgments that befel the Philiſtines who took it.

This very warlike and powerful nation had been permitted to haraſs and oppreſs the Iſraelites; and theſe being defeated in battle, and recollecting the wonders wrought in their favour when the ark was in their camp (as when the river Jordan was divided before the prieſts who carried it, and when the walls of Jericho fell down at its preſence)

preſence) preſumptuouſly, and without any divine direction, fetched the ark into their camp. *Let us*, ſay they, 1 Sam. iv. 3, *fetch the ark of the covenant of Jehovah out of Shiloh, unto us; that when it cometh to us, it may ſave us out of the hand of our enemies.* When they had done ſo, they felt themſelves full of confidence, ſo that it is ſaid *they ſhouted with a great ſhout, and the earth rang again.*

The Philiſtines were no ſtrangers to the hiſtory of the Iſraelites, and, like all other antient nations, aſcribing their ſucceſs to the ſuperior power of their gods, were greatly alarmed at this event. For we read, ver. 7. *And the Philiſtines were afraid. For they ſaid, God is come into the camp. Woe unto us; for there has not been ſuch a thing heretofore. Woe unto us, who ſhall deliver us out of the hand of theſe mighty Gods? Theſe are the Gods that ſmote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderneſs.* However, recovering from their conſternation, and exerting themſelves in the battle, they gained the victory, and took the ark itſelf.

This

This was, no doubt, a cauſe of great exultation to the Philiſtines, who, conſidering it as a triumph of their god Dagon over the God of the Iſraelites, carried the ark into his temple. But their triumph was not of long continuance. For, as we read, Ch. v. 3, *Riſing early in the morning, they found Dagon laid on his face before the ark.* This muſt have been performed by miracle, as the image was not broken, as it would have been by a natural fall, from being unequally poiſed, and the foundation by any accident giving way, unleſs the image had been of wood, in which caſe the next event muſt have been miraculous.

The Philiſtines, not wholly diſconcerted by this diſaſter, and willing, no doubt, to attribute it to ſome accident, though they might not be able ſatisfactorily to account for it, ſet the image in his place again. But early the next morning they found ſomething more diſaſtrous ſtill; for *the head of Dagon, and both the palms of his hands, were cut off upon the threſhold,* to which it is probable they muſt have been carried from ſome diſtance; for it is moſt likely

likely that, as in other heathen temples, the image would be placed oppoſite to the door, in the moſt remote part of the building. It is added, that *only the ſtump of Dagon was left to him*; ſo that *this* could not have been a fall of the image, but a violent ſeparation of its parts, and therefore unqueſtionably miraculous.

Alarmed at this ſecond diſaſter, the Philiſtines do not appear to have made any attempt to repair or replace the image, and perhaps removed the ark from the temple. But the divine interpoſition did not end here. The people of Aſhdod, who had the cuſtody of the ark, were univerſally viſited with a ſore plague of emrods, while the reſt of the nation were free from it; and aſcribing this to the preſence of the ark, it was by common conſent removed to Gath. The people of Gath being afflicted with the ſame plague, they ſent it to Ekron. But the inhabitants of this city were ſo terrified at its approach, that they ſent and aſſembled all the lords of the Philiſtines, and by them it was agreed to ſend it back, *leſt*, as they ſaid, *it ſlay us and our people.*

For

For, it is added, *there was a deadly deſtruction throughout all their cities; the hand of God was very heavy there, and the men that died not were ſmitten with emrods, and the cry of the city went up to heaven.*

The whole nation being now thoroughly alarmed, they agreed to ſend away the ark without any farther delay, and with preſents, to appeaſe the anger of the God to whom it was ſacred. *Wherefore*, ſaid they, Ch. vi. 6, *Do ye harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he wrought wonderfully among them. Did they not let the people go?* But, to aſcertain whether what had befallen them was owing to a real miracle, or not, they agreed to place the ark upon a cart, and that it ſhould be drawn by milch cows, whoſe calves were left at home, which it was well known the cows would not naturally leave. *See*, ſay they, Ch. v. 9, *If it go up by the way of its own coaſt, to Beth-ſhemeſh, then he* (i. e. Jehovah) *has done us this great evil; but if not, we ſhall know that it is not his hand that ſmote us. It was a chance that happened to us.* Accordingly,

as

as we read, *they did ſo, and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and ſhut up their calves at home.* The event muſt have ſatisfied them that what they had ſuffered was no chance, but the judgment of a ſuperior power. For, as we read, ver. 12. *The cows took the ſtraight way, the way to Bethſhemeſh, and went along the high way, lowing as they went, and turned not aſide to the right hand or to the left; and the lords of the Philiſtines went after them, unto the borders of Bethſhemeſh.*

It may be ſaid, that this ſtory is written by Hebrews, and therefore of ſuſpicious authenticity. But the taking of the ark, or the not taking of it, by their enemies, muſt have been a thing of ſuch notoriety, and importance, that no hiſtorian would have ventured to record what was known to be untrue with reſpect to it. A fiction ſo extravagant as this, could never have gained credit, and leaſt of all with a people not naturally prejudiced in favour of their religion, but always inclined to that of their neighbours. And if the ark *was* taken by the Philiſtines, the return of it

was

was a ſufficient proof of its being in conſequence of a miracle. For nothing could have induced the Philiſtines voluntarily to give up ſuch a trophy of their victory, ſo clear a monument, as they would conſider it, of the ſuperiority of their gods to the God of their enemies.

Beſides, the ſubſequent hiſtory of the Iſraelites is a proof of the authenticity of this event. For after this we do not, of a long time, read of any relapſe into idolatry; and the obſervance of their own religion was thoroughly eſtabliſhed in the ſucceeding times of David and Solomon, during which the country enjoyed a diſtinguiſhed ſtate of proſperity and glory.

By the folly and obſtinacy of Rehoboam the ten tribes revolted from the houſe of David. And it was the policy of Jeroboam, whom they made their king, in order to prevent his ſubjects from returning to the houſe of David, to provide a different mode and place of worſhip for them; but ſtill the difference was only in mode and form, and not with reſpect to its object. For it was the worſhip of Jehovah

by

by the images of calves, to which they had been accuſtomed in Egypt, where Jeroboam himſelf had reſided during his baniſhment from his own country in the reign of Solomon. Theſe calves he ſet up at Dan in the northern part of the country, and at Bethel in the ſouthern.

The poſterity of Jeroboam was cut off in the fourth generation, according to an expreſs prophecy delivered to him. Baaſha, who ſucceeded them, trod in his ſteps, notwithſtanding the ſame ſentence paſſed upon him, and which was executed by Zimri, who was dethroned by Omri. Ahab, the ſon of Omri, who married Jezebel, a daughter of the idolatrous king of Tyre, went beyond all his predeceſſors in idolatry and wickedneſs. For we read, 1 Kings xvi. 31; *As if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the ſins of Jeroboam the ſon of Nebat, he went and ſerved Baal, and worſhipped him. And Ahab made a grove, and he did more to provoke Jehovah, the God of Iſrael, to anger, than all the kings of Iſrael that went before him.* This was the introduction of the worſhip of *another God,*

God, with rites of a peculiarly horrid nature.

In this reign, at a time of general apoſtaſy, appeared the famous prophet Elijah the Tiſhbite, who opened his commiſſion with denouncing the judgments of God upon the country in a drought of three years continuance, followed, of courſe, by a dreadful famine. In the laſt period of this great judgment Elijah met Ahab, who accoſted him by ſaying, 1 Kings xviii. 17, *Art thou he who troubleth Iſrael?* The prophet anſwered, *I have not troubled Iſrael, but thou and thy father's houſe, in that ye have forſaken the commandment of Jehovah, and have followed Baalim.*

After this the prophet made the following fair propoſal, in order to determine which of the two, *Jehovah*, or *Baal*, was the true God; 1 Kings xviii. 21. *Elijah came unto all the people, and ſaid, How long halt ye between two opinions? If Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.* The people being ſilent, the prophet proceeded as follows: *I, even I only, remain a prophet of Jehovah, but Baal's pro-*

phets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them, therefore, give us two bullocks, and let them chuſe one bullock for themſelves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under; and I will dreſs the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under. Then call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of Jehovah; and the God that anſwereth by fire, let him be God.

To this the people agreed, ver. 24. *And the people anſwered, and ſaid, It is well ſpoken.* By this time the long drought and famine muſt have led the people to ſuſpect the power of the new God, whoſe worſhip they had adopted. They were therefore the better diſpoſed to liſten to the propoſal of Elijah. And as the miracle which followed was particularly calculated to eſtabliſh the truth of the religion of the Hebrews, as delivered by Moſes, in a time of general apoſtaſy from it, ſo that it is of more importance than any of the miracles ſubſequent to the time of Moſes, I ſhall dwell the longer on the circumſtances of it.

The

The prieſts of Baal, having nothing to object to the fair propoſal of Elijah, took the bullock which they had choſen, and dreſſed it; and having placed it on the wood, they *called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, ſaying*, ver. 26, *O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that anſwered.* This continued till the time of evening ſacrifice, theſe prieſts having recourſe to all their uſual modes of invocation, one of which was to cut themſelves with knives and lancets till the blood guſhed out, while Elijah, confident of his ſucceſs, mocked them, ſaying, v. 27, *Cry aloud, for he is a God. Either he is talking, or he is purſuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he ſleepeth, and muſt be awaked.*

The prieſts of Baal having tried all their arts to no purpoſe, Elijah's turn came; and by way of preparation, he repaired an old altar, building it of twelve ſtones, and making a trench all round it; and when he had placed the ſacrifice on the wood, in order to make the miracle as unexceptionable as poſſible, he bade the people fill the

trench with water, and to drench both the ſacrifice and the wood with it. This was done even three times, till, as we read, *the water ran round about the altar, and he filled the trench with the water.*

When this was done, and the time of the evening ſacrifice approached, Elijah made the following prayer, ver. 36, *Jehovah, God of Abraham, Iſaac, and Iſrael, let it be known this day, that thou art God in Iſrael, and that I am thy ſervant, and that I have done all theſe things at thy word. Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me that this thy people may know that thou, Jehovah, art God, and that thou haſt turned their heart back again.*

Having pronounced this prayer, in the hearing of all the people, the purport of it was fully accompliſhed. For as we read, ver. 38, *Then the fire of Jehovah fell, and conſumed the burnt ſacrifice, and the wood, and the very ſtones, and dried up the water that was in the trench.*

Nothing now remained to complete the conviction of all the people, who were ſpectators of ſo great and evident a miracle.

And

And when all the people ſaw it, they fell on their faces, and ſaid, Jehovah he is God, Jehovah he is God. And being ſatisfied with reſpect to this great article, they could not refuſe complying with the expreſs order of God by Moſes, which was to put to death thoſe prieſts of Baal who had ſeduced them to their apoſtaſy from their own God. For thus the hiſtory proceeds, *And Elijah ſaid unto them, Take the prophets of Baal, let not one of them eſcape; and they took them, and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kidron, and ſlew them there.* Immediately upon this an end was put to the long and deſtructive drought, the rain coming in torrents.

After this we read no more of Ahab worſhipping Baal, though, at the inſtigation of his wife, he had the wickedneſs to contrive the murder of Naboth, in order to get poſſeſſion of his vineyard; and in conſequence he was, according to the prediction of a prophet, ſlain in battle, the dogs licking his blood in the very place where that of Naboth had been ſhed.

His ſon Jehoaſh, as we read, 2 Kings iii. 21, *Wrought evil in the ſight of the Lord, but not like his father, or like his mother; for he put away the images of Baal which his father had made. Nevertheleſs he clave to the ſin of Jeroboam, the ſon of Nebat, and departed not therefrom.* Jehu, alſo, who deſtroyed all the poſterity of Ahab, agreeable to a prediction to that purpoſe, and who put to death the prieſts of Baal, adhered to the worſhip of Jeroboam's calves, 2 Kings x. 29. This too was the caſe with all the remaining kings of Iſrael. We read no more of any public encouragement given to the worſhip of Baal, though it muſt have been practiſed by many individuals, or there could not have been found ſo many prieſts of Baal as were put to death by Jehu, after the ſlaughter of them by Elijah. And when the reaſons are given for God's forſaking that nation, and giving them up to be conquered, and carried into captivity by the kings of Aſſyria, it is ſaid, 2 Kings xvii. 16, *They left all the commandments of Jehovah their God, and made them*

them molten images, even two calves; and they made a grove, and worſhipped all the hoſt of heaven, and ſerved Baal; and they cauſed their ſons and their daughters to paſs through the fire, and uſed divinations and enchantments, and ſold themſelves to do evil in the ſight of Jehovah, to provoke him to anger. Therefore was Jehovah angry with Iſrael, and removed them out of his ſight.

We ſee, however, the evidence of this great miracle of Elijah in the effects which it produced; as it ſeems to have put a ſtop to the more public worſhip of Baal, to which the prince and the people had been long addicted, and to have eſtabliſhed the belief of the ſuperiority of Jehovah, the God of Iſrael. And, indeed, nothing could have been better calculated to anſwer the purpoſe.

This miracle was performed in public, due notice was given beforehand, and it was in the preſence of enemies; the prophet of Jehovah being but one, and the prieſts of Baal four hundred and fifty men, the prince and conſequently all the great men in the nation favouring them. Un-

protected as Elijah was, it might have been in their power to impoſe upon him, as by privately introducing fire to conſume the ſacrifice, but it could not have been in his power to impoſe upon them. To cut off all ſuſpicion of the kind, he made it as difficult as poſſible for the fire to have any effect on the ſacrifice. The prieſts of Baal had all the time that they could wiſh for, having been employed from morning till the time of evening ſacrifice. But on the prayer of Elijah, in the very unfavourable circumſtances that have been deſcribed, the fire took place in an inſtant, and not only were the wood, and the ſacrifice, conſumed, but even the water in the trench that had been made round it diſſipated, and the ſtones themſelves conſumed, probably *calcined*, which is the greateſt effect of fire upon ſtone. Conſequently, it could not be denied that Jehovah appeared to be the God of nature, the ſole author and controller of its laws.

There is another event in the ſubſequent part of the reign of Ahab, well calculated to confirm him and the people of Iſrael in the

the worſhip of Jehovah as the God of univerſal nature. The Syrians, having been defeated by the Iſraelites in a battle fought in the hill country, imagined, as we read 2 Kings xx. 23, *that the Gods of Iſrael were Gods of the hills. Therefore, ſaid they, they are ſtronger than we; but let us fight againſt them in the plain, and ſurely we ſhall be ſtronger than they.* On this, as we read ver. 28, *there came a man of God, and ſpake to the king of Iſrael and ſaid, Thus ſaith Jehovah; Becauſe the Syrians have ſaid that Jehovah is God of the hills, but he is not God of the vallies, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thy hand, and ye ſhall know that I am Jehovah.* Accordingly we read that, though the army of the Iſraelites were like *two little flocks of kids*, while that of the Syrians *filled the country*; when the battle was fought in the plain, the Iſraelites ſlew of the Syrians an hundred thouſand footmen in one day.

Having given this general view of the moſt important of the miraculous events that occur in the hiſtory of the kingdom of Iſrael, I ſhall conſider thoſe that occur

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in the hiſtory of Judah, which are no leſs remarkable, and equally calculated to confirm the people in their attachment to their religion, notwithſtanding their proneneſs to idolatry.

The kingdom of Judah had many excellent and pious princes, ſtrict obſervers of the laws of Moſes, but ſeveral of them apoſtatized to the idolatrous cuſtoms of the neighbouring nations. It is remarkable that even Solomon, who built the temple, and to whom God had appeared twice, from complaiſance to his wives of foreign nations, not only permitted them to introduce the worſhip of the Gods of their reſpective countries, but himſelf, at leaſt, occaſionally joined them in it. His ſon Rehoboam did the ſame, and no doubt encouraged the common people to do it. Indeed, ſuch examples were ſufficient without any poſitive precept. In this reign, as we read, 1 Kings xiv. 22, *the people did evil in the ſight of the Lord, and they provoked him to jealouſy with their ſins, which they had committed above all that their fathers had done. For they alſo built them high places, and images,*

images, and groves on every high hill, and under every green tree, and there were Sodomites alſo in the land. For even this unnatural vice was a rite in ſome of the heathen religions, eſpecially in Egypt, where it was imagined that the regular riſe of the Nile (on which the fertility of Egypt depends) was connected with that abominable practice in the prieſts, and it was not aboliſhed till the time of Conſtantine. *And they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord caſt out before the children of Iſrael.*

After the two pious princes Aſa and Jehoſhaphat, came Jehoram, who, having married a daughter of Ahab, adopted his religion, which was the worſhip of Baal, after the manner of the Tyrians; and his ſon Ahaziah trod in his ſteps. In the reign of Joaſh the worſhip of the true God was reſtored by the pious high-prieſt Jehoiada, and the ſucceeding princes are not much blamed till we come to Ahaz, who is ſaid, 2 Chron. xxviii. 2. to have *walked in the ways of the kings of Iſrael, and to have made molten images for Baalim. Moreover he burned*

burned incenſe in the valley of the ſon of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire, after the abominations of the Heathens, whom the Lord had caſt out before the children of Iſrael.

Ahaz was ſucceeded by the pious Hezekiah, in whoſe reign there occurs a miracle the moſt directly calculated to eſtabliſh the ſole divinity of the God of Iſrael, and conſequently the truth of the Moſaic diſpenſation, of any that we find in the hiſtory of the kings of Judah.

The ten tribes had been conquered, and carried into captivity, by Shalmanezer king of Aſſyria, in the ſixth year of Hezekiah, agreeably to an expreſs prediction of the prophet Iſaiah, delivered in the firſt year of Ahaz; and in the fourteenth of his reign Sennacherib, another king of Aſſyria, having greatly enlarged the bounds of his empire, invaded Judah; and having taken ſome of the defenceleſs cities, he ſent an inſulting meſſage to Hezekiah, demanding the ſurrender of his country, and admoniſhing him not to truſt in the protection of his God. In his addreſs to the people

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on this occaſion he ſays, Iſa. xxxvi. 18, &c. *Beware leſt Hezekiah perſuade you, ſaying, Jehovah will deliver us. Has any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hands of the kings of Aſſyria? Where are the gods of Hamath, and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are thoſe among all the gods of thy land, that have delivered their land out of my hands, that Jehovah ſhould deliver Jeruſalem out of my hand?* I cannot help obſerving by the way, how temporal proſperity was conſidered in theſe times as a proof of the power of the gods that were acknowledged by different nations; and on this account, perhaps, as I have obſerved, the true God was pleaſed to propoſe temporal felicity as the ſanction of the religion inſtituted by Moſes, taking the teſt of real divinity that was actually adopted by all nations. But to reſume the thread of this remarkable hiſtory.

In this diſtreſſing ſituation this pious prince, having no ſufficient force to oppoſe to this haughty and powerful invader,

applied to the prophet Iſaiah, who immediately anſwered, ch. xxxvii. 6. *Thus ſhall ye ſay to your maſter, Thus ſaith Jehovah, Be not afraid of the words that thou haſt heard, wherewith the ſervants of the king of Aſſyria has blaſphemed me. Behold I will ſend a blaſt upon him, and he ſhall hear a rumour, and return to his own land, and I will cauſe him to fall by the ſword in his own land.*

After this a letter was ſent by the king of Aſſyria to Hezekiah, to the ſame purport with the preceding meſſage. This letter Hezekiah took to the temple, Iſa. xxxvii. 14. *and ſpread it before the Lord*; at the ſame time making the following ſolemn prayer! *O Lord of Hoſts, God of Iſrael, who dwelleſt between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. Thou haſt made heaven and earth. Incline thine ear, O Lord, and hear; open thine eyes, O Lord, and ſee, and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has ſent to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Aſſyria have laid waſte all nations, and their countries, and*

have

have caſt their gods into the fire; for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and ſtone; therefore they have deſtroyed them. Now, therefore, O Jehovah, ſave us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord, even thou alone.

Upon this Iſaiah was directed to ſend to the king, and he concluded his meſſage with ſaying, *Therefore, thus ſaith Jehovah, concerning the king of Aſſyria, He ſhall not come into this city, nor ſhoot an arrow there, nor come before it with ſhields, nor caſt a bank againſt it. By the way that he came, by the ſame ſhall he return, and ſhall not come into this city, ſaith Jehovah; for I will defend this city, to ſave it, for my own ſake, and my ſervant David's ſake.*

The event verified this prediction; for after this we read, ver. 30, *Then the angel of the Lord went forth and ſmote in the camp of the Aſſyrians, an hundred and four-ſcore and five thouſand; and when they* (the remainder) *roſe early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpſes.* This ſudden deſtruction of the army of the Aſſyrians is mentioned

mentioned by Herodotus, the oldeſt heathen hiſtorian. After this, to verify the remainder of the prophecy, the following events took place. Sennacherib, after his return to Nineveh his capital, was killed by two of his ſons, as he was worſhipping in the houſe of Niſroch his God, as it were to demonſtrate the impotence of this boaſted god to ſave his moſt zealous worſhipper.

Notwithſtanding this moſt extraordinary event, Manaſſeh, the ſon of Hezekiah, but who was born after this time, and who came to the throne at the early age of twelve years, falling, as we may well ſuppoſe, into the hands of evil counſellors, revolted to the worſhip of Baal, and, as we read, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 3, *worſhipped all the hoſt of heaven, and ſerved them.* He even built altars to them in the temple itſelf. *He built altars for all the hoſt of heaven in the two courts of the houſe of the Lord, and he cauſed his children to paſs through the fire in the valley of the ſon of Hinnom. Alſo he obſerved times, and uſed enchantments, and uſed witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar*

ſpirit, and with wizards. For this he was carried captive to Babylon; but, on his repentance, he was reſtored to his own country.

The only good reign after this was that of Joſiah, and in thirty years after his death the long threatened judgments of God overtook that apoſtate nation, for they were conquered, Jeruſalem and the temple deſtroyed, and the people carried captive by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, about a hundred years after the conqueſt and captivity of the ten tribes by the Aſſyrians.

During this long captivity in Babylon, continuing, according to the expreſs prediction of Jeremiah, ſeventy years, God did not forſake his choſen people. Two eminent prophets, Ezekiel and Daniel, whoſe predictions look into the remoteſt times, even beyond thoſe in which we live, were raiſed up there,.. and in Babylon itſelf, emphatically called the *mother of harlots*, or idols, a city the moſt noted for its addictedneſs to idolatry of any in the antient world, and as it were the parent of

idolatry to all the reſt. We find at this time ſignal diſplays of the power of the true God, in direct oppoſition to this idolatry; and the miracles which were wrought for this purpoſe evidently had a great effect at the time, and probably ſo impreſſed the minds of Nebuchadnezzar, Darius the Mede, and Cyrus, as both to procure the Jews better treatment during the captivity, and their final releaſe from it.

Daniel firſt brought himſelf into the favourable notice of Nebuchadnezzar and the people of Babylon, by being enabled not only to interpret a remarkable dream of that prince, but to inform him what the dream was when he had forgotten it himſelf, and when, as might be expected, all the aſtrologers and magicians of Babylon had not been able to do it. On this Nebuchadnezzar was induced to declare, Dan. ii. 47. *Of a truth, it is that your God is a God of Gods, and Lord of Lords, and a revealer of ſecrets, ſeeing thou couldeſt reveal this ſecret.*

Daniel alſo interpreted another dream of Nebuchadnezzar, which foretold his own

degradation, and his reſtoration to his underſtanding and his kingdom, after a period of ſeven years, which drew from that prince a remarkable narrative, in the form of a public decree, to be circulated through his whole empire, addreſſed, in his own lofty ſtyle, *to all people, nations, and languages, that dwell upon all the earth.* It begins in this ſolemn manner, *I thought it good to ſhew the ſigns and wonders which the high God has wrought towards me. How great are his ſigns and how mighty are his wonders. His kingdom is an everlaſting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.* And it concludes thus, *Now I Nebuchadnezzar praiſe, and extol, and honour, the King of Heaven, all whoſe works are truth, and his ways judgment; and thoſe that walk in pride he is able to abaſe.*

Laſtly, Daniel interpreted the awful handwriting on the wall at the impious feaſt of Belſhazzar, and thereby foretold the fall of the Babylonian empire, which was immediately accompliſhed; for in that very night was Belſhazzar ſlain, and the kingdoms of the Medes and Perſians eſtabliſhed.

Under Darius the Mede Daniel was miraculouſly delivered from the den of lions, into which he had been thrown for the profeſſion of his religion by a decree artfully drawn from that king. That theſe lions did not ſpare Daniel on account of ſome caſual indiſpoſition, appeared from their ſeizing and devouring his enemies, whom the king ordered to be thrown to the ſame lions as ſoon as Daniel was taken out of the den. For we read, Dan. vi. 24. that *they brake all their bones in pieces, or ever they came to the bottom of the den.* This remarkable deliverance drew from Darius as remarkable a decree. Dan. vi. 25. *Then King Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth, Peace be multiplied. I make a decree that, in every dominion of my kingdom, men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, and ſtandeth for ever, and his kingdom that which ſhall not be deſtroyed, and his dominion ſhall be even unto the end; who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.*

But

But the miracle that was more particularly calculated to demonſtrate the ſuperiority of the true God with reſpect to the idols of Babylon, was one in which Daniel had no perſonal concern. It was the deliverance of his companions, Shadrach, Meſhech, and Abednego, from the fiery furnace, for refuſing to fall down and worſhip a golden image which Nebuchadnezzar had ſet up. The furnace was even heated ſeven times for this purpoſe, and yet theſe three men, the worſhippers of the true God, after they were caſt into it, were ſeen walking about at their eaſe, in the midſt of the fire, accompanied by a fourth perſon, who was probably an angel. Nebuchadnezzar, having himſelf ſeen them in this ſituation, ordered them to be called out, and then made the following declaration and decree; Dan. iii. 28. *Bleſſed be the God of Shadrach, Meſhech, and Abednego, who hath ſent his angel, and delivered his ſervants who truſted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not ſerve nor worſhip any God except their own God. Therefore I*

make a decree, that all people, nations, and languages, which ſpeak any thing amiſs of, (or againſt) *the God of Shadrach, Meſhech, and Abednego, ſhall be cut in pieces, and their houſe ſhall be made a dunghill, becauſe there is no other god that can deliver after this ſort.* Thus were theſe idolators brought to confeſs the ſuperiority of the true God; and though theſe miracles did not induce them to abandon the worſhip of their own gods, they muſt have made a ſtrong impreſſion in favour of the Jews and their religion.

The impreſſion which theſe miracles made on the Babylonians, and other foreign nations, does not appear for want of ſufficiently ample hiſtories of thoſe times. But the probability is that many individuals, though not any whole nation, became converts to the fundamental principles of the Jewiſh religion, as great numbers did in after times without becoming proper proſelytes to Judaiſm. This was remarkably the caſe in our Saviour's time. Many of the Gentiles, eſpecially ſuch as reſided in Judea, or the neighbourhood of it, as Cornelius

Cornelius of Cæsarea and the centurion of Capernaum, rejected the absurdities of polytheism, and privately worshipped the one true God. This we also find had the happiest effect on their conduct, as in those two persons, who were eminent for their piety and benevolence, and of whom by accident we have a particular account. And this, it is to be observed, was antecedent to, and independently of, any thing that was done by Christ, or Christianity. It is also observable that we meet with no miracles, or pretension to miracles, from the time of the Babylonish captivity to the time of Christ; so that whatever good impressions had been made on the minds of any in favour of the Jewish religion, it must have been produced by the miracles of preceding ages, and therefore their credibility must have been well established.

Whatever was the effect of these miraculous events on the neighbouring nations, the impression was never effaced from the minds of the Jews. For, from having been, in a remarkable degree, prone to idolatry, (which is a circumstance highly favour-

able to the credibility of the miracles calculated to counteract that tendency) it is from this æra that we date their peculiarly unſhaken attachment to their religion, and their inexpreſſible averſion to idolatry, and to every thing approaching to it.

Two circumſtances, beſides the direct impreſſion of the miracles above mentioned, may have contributed to this. The firſt was the complete fulfilment of the prophecies of Moſes concerning their being driven from their own country, on account of their addictedneſs to idolatry, and the vices accompanying it, together with the equally literal fulfilment of the prophecy of Jeremiah reſpecting their return, and the fall of the Babyloniſh empire. Their ſufferings before this had been ſlight, and of ſhort continuance compared with theſe.

The ſecond circumſtance was the clear conviction that the idols of Babylon had not been able to defend that city from the arms of the Medes and Perſians, who had no idols, and whoſe conqueſt had been foretold by Daniel. And it muſt not be forgotten, that in thoſe days, and long after,

after, the great teſt of the goodneſs of any religion was the temporal proſperity with which the obſervance of its rites was accompanied; on which account, as I have obſerved before, temporal proſperity might have been annexed by the Divine Being to the obſervance of the Jewiſh religion. Whereas, however, the hiſtory of other nations, examined by this teſt, is far from furniſhing any proof of the truth of their religions, that of the Jews, from their taking poſſeſſion of the land of Canaan to their captivity in Babylon (in which, being of conſiderable extent, they had ſufficient leiſure to reflect on the ſubject) ſupplies an abundant proof of the truth of theirs. Nothing, however, but this full conviction can account for the remarkable fact, of the total change in the diſpoſition and hearts of the whole Jewiſh nation after this time, and which has continued to this day, without the leaſt proſpect of a change; though in all this time they do not pretend that any miracles have been wrought in atteſtation of it. For though they had prophets after their return from Babylon, viz. Haggai, Zechariah,

Zechariah, and Malachi, it does not appear that they wrought any miracles. They only foretold future and distant events, and exhorted the people in the name of God.

This important subject of prophecy I reserve for the subject of another discourse.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE VIII.

Of the Prophecies concerning the Diſperſion and Reſtoration of the Jews.

I call heaven and earth to record this day againſt you, that I have ſet before you life and death, bleſſing and curſing.

DEUT. XXX. 19.

IN my laſt diſcourſe I obſerved that the remarkable change in the diſpoſition and conduct of the Jews, which took place from the time of the Babyloniſh captivity, may be, in a great meaſure, at leaſt, accounted for, from the very ſtriking fulfilment of the prophecies of Moſes and Jeremiah in that captivity. The prophecies of Moſes concerning the calamities and intire diſperſion of the Iſraelites, and likewiſe his prophecies, and thoſe of others who ſucceeded him, concerning their return to their

their own country, after their expulſion from it, and their diſperſion into all parts of the world, and concerning their proſperous ſtate afterwards, are ſo very remarkable, and add ſo much to the evidence of the divine miſſion of Moſes, and of thoſe other prophets, and conſequently to that of the truth of the Jewiſh religion, that, after conſidering, as I have done, the *miracles* that were expreſsly wrought for that purpoſe, I ſhall make *them* the ſubject of this diſcourſe.

The prophecies of Moſes will appear more extraordinary, if we conſider the circumſtances of the Iſraelites at the time in which they were delivered. They had juſt left Egypt, and had not then obtained poſſeſſion of the land of Canaan; and yet Moſes not only ſpeaks with the greateſt certainty of their conquering that country, then fully peopled, and in the poſſeſſion of nations far more powerful than they, but of their future expulſion from that country, in conſequence of ſins not then committed, and to appearance very unlikely ever to be committed, viz. an apoſtaſy from their religion,

religion, confirmed by recent miracles, of which it was impoſſible that they ſhould entertain the ſmalleſt doubt. But what is infinitely more extraordinary, he foretels their reſtoration to their country in a very diſtant period; and that after this they ſhould be the firſt of nations, and that all the promiſes of God to Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, would then be illuſtriouſly fulfilled.

Moſes not only foretold the calamities of the Iſraelites, and their expulſion from the promiſed land, *conditionally*, in which caſe it could not have been conſidered as much more than a threatening, but *abſolutely*. For thus we read, Deut. xxxi. 16. *And the Lord ſaid unto Moſes, Behold thou ſhalt ſleep with thy fathers, and this people will riſe up, and go a whoring after the gods of the ſtrangers of the land whither they go to be among them, and forſake me, and break the covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger ſhall be kindled againſt them in that day, and I will forſake them, and hide my face from them, and they ſhall be devoured, and many evils and troubles ſhall befall them, ſo that they will ſay in that day, Are not*

theſe

theſe evils come upon us becauſe our God is not among us? And I will ſurely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they have wrought, in that they are turned to other gods. Accordingly Moſes ſays, Deut. xxxi. 29. *I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourſelves, and turn aſide from the way which I have commanded you, and evil will befall you in the latter days, becauſe ye will do evil in the ſight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger, through the work of your hands.*

As a more ſolemn warning ſtill, Moſes was directed to compoſe a hymn, in which particular mention ſhould be made of the judgments of God in conſequence of their future apoſtaſy, a hymn which he was to commit to writing, and which the people were to learn by heart. Deut. xxxi. 19. *Now, therefore, write ye this ſong for you, and teach it the children of Iſrael. For when I ſhall have brought them into the land which I ſware unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey, and they ſhall have eaten and filled themſelves, and waxen fat, then will they turn to other gods, and ſerve them,*

and

and provoke me, and break my covenant. And it ſhall come to paſs that when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this ſong ſhall teſtify againſt them, as a witneſs; for it ſhall not be forgotten out of the mouth of their ſeed. For I know their imagination which they go about, even now before I have brought them into the land which I ſware. Moſes therefore wrote the ſong the ſame day, and taught it the children of Iſrael. This remarkable ſong, or poetical compoſition, remains to this day; and yet the nation, though warned in this uncommonly ſolemn manner, brought upon themſelves all the calamities announced in it.

This prophecy concerning the judgments of God upon the Iſraelitiſh nation, and eſpecially ſo remarkable an event as their expulſion from the land of Canaan, and their diſperſion among all nations, is not contained in a ſingle obſcure paſſage in the writings of Moſes, but it is repeated again and again, in the plaineſt language that can be uſed. Nor is the prophecy expreſſed in general terms only, but many particulars are mentioned, and all of them

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are ſo fully come to paſs, as is evident at this day, that every perſon who gives due attention to the facts muſt be ſtruck with the correſpondence.

You will farther obſerve the peculiar ſolemnity, and affection, with which theſe judgments are announced. Had Moſes been literally the father of the whole nation he could not have expreſſed himſelf with more affectionate concern. Deut. iv. 25. *And when thou ſhalt beget children, and children's children, and ſhalt have remained long in the land, and ſhall corrupt yourſelves, and make a graven image, or likeneſs of any thing, and ſhall do evil in the ſight of the Lord thy God, to provoke him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witneſs againſt thee this day, that ye ſhall ſoon utterly periſh from off the land whereunto ye go beyond Jordan to poſſeſs it. Ye ſhall not prolong your days upon it, but ſhall utterly be deſtroyed. And the Lord ſhall ſcatter you among the nations, and ye ſhall be left few in number among the Heathen whither the Lord ſhall lead you, and there ye ſhall ſerve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and ſtone,*

which

which neither hear, nor ſee, nor eat, nor ſmell.

This is a ſubject much dwelt upon by this eminent legiſlator and prophet; and in other paſſages of his writings ſome more circumſtances attending theſe great calamities, and this total diſperſion of the Iſraelites, are mentioned. In Lev. xxvi. 31, he ſays, *Ye ſhall eat the fleſh of your ſons, and the fleſh of your daughters ſhall ye eat, and I will make your cities waſte, and bring your ſanctuaries to deſolation, and I will not ſmell the ſavour of your ſweet odours. And I will bring the land into deſolation, and your enemies ſhall dwell therein, and be aſtoniſhed at it. And I will ſcatter you among the Heathen, and I will draw out a ſword after you, and your lands ſhall be deſolate, and your cities waſte. Then ſhall the land enjoy her ſabbaths, as long as it lieth deſolate, and ye be in your enemies land; even then ſhall the land reſt, and enjoy her ſabbaths. And ye ſhall periſh among the Heathen, and the land of your enemies ſhall eat you up.*

Deut. xxviii. 25. *The Lord ſhall cauſe you to be ſmitten before your enemies. Thou*

ſhalt go out one way againſt them, and ſhalt flee ſeven ways before them, and ſhalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. Ver. 36, *The Lord ſhall bring thee, and thy king which thou ſhalt ſet over thee,* (And this you will obſerve was written before the Iſraelites had any king, and when their conſtitution did not ſuppoſe any) *unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, and there ſhalt thou ſerve other gods, wood and ſtone. And thou ſhalt become an aſtoniſhment, and a proverb, and a bye-word, among the nations whither the Lord ſhall lead thee.* Ver. 47, *Becauſe thou ſervedeſt not the Lord thy God with joyfulneſs and gladneſs of heart, for the abundance of all things, therefore ſhalt thou ſerve thine enemies, which the Lord ſhall ſend againſt thee, in hunger, and in thirſt, and in nakedneſs, and in the want of all things; and they ſhall be a yoke of iron upon thy neck until he has deſtroyed thee. The Lord ſhall bring againſt thee from afar, from the ends of the earth, as ſwift as the eagle flyeth, a nation whoſe tongue thou ſhalt not underſtand, a nation of fierce countenance, which ſhall not*

regard

regard the perſons of the old, nor ſhew favour to the young. And he ſhall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be deſtroyed. And he ſhall beſiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou truſtedſt, throughout all the land. Ver. 62, *And ye ſhall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the ſtars in the heaven for multitude, becauſe thou wouldeſt not obey the voice of the Lord thy God. And the Lord ſhall ſcatter thee among all people, from one end of the earth even unto the other. And among thoſe nations ſhalt thou find no eaſe, neither ſhall the ſole of thy foot have reſt; but the Lord ſhall give thee there a trembling heart, and fainting of eyes, and ſorrow of mind.* Ver. 68, *And the Lord ſhall bring thee into Egypt again with ſhips, by the way whereof I ſpake unto thee. Thou ſhalt ſee it no more again. And ye ſhall be ſold unto your enemies, for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man ſhall buy you.*

The manner in which both the Iſraelites in diſtant ages, and ſtrangers, who ſhall ſee the accompliſhment of theſe awful pre-

dictions, ſhall be impreſſed by them, is particularly mentioned by this prophet, Deut. xxix. 22. *The generation to come, of your children that ſhall riſe up after you, and the ſtranger that ſhall come from a far land, ſhall ſay, when they ſee the plagues of that land, and the ſickneſſes which the Lord ſhall lay upon it;—even all nations ſhall ſay, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? What meaneth the heat of this great anger? Then men ſhall ſay, Becauſe they have forſaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers which he made with them, when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt. For they went and ſerved other gods, and worſhipped them, gods whom they knew not, and whom he had not given unto them. And the anger of the Lord was kindled againſt this land, to bring upon it all the curſes which are written in this book. And the Lord rooted them out of this land in anger, in wrath, and in great indignation, and caſt them into another land, as it is this day.*

The well known hiſtory, and preſent ſtate, of the Jews make it unneceſſary for

for me to dwell long upon the accompliſhment of theſe remarkable prophecies. The extermination and diſperſion of the Iſraelites began at the captivity of the ten tribes by the Aſſyrians, followed by that of the tribe of Judah by the Babylonians, but was in the moſt ſignal manner completed by the Romans, a nation that indeed *came from far*, and *whoſe language they did not underſtand.* The war, conducted by Veſpaſian and Titus, was dreadfully calamitous, and the ſiege of Jeruſalem ſuch as yet remains unequalled for diſtreſs, and the deſtruction of men, in all hiſtory. So great was the famine with which they were preſſed, that there are inſtances on record of women actually killing and eating their own children.

At the cloſe of that war, all the markets for ſlaves were ſo much overſtocked with Jews, that they bore no price, and great numbers were taken to Egypt by ſea, and diſpoſed of there. But even this was not the completion of their calamities. Under the emperor Adrian the Jews were effectually driven out of Judea, and none of them

ſuffered to reſide in it. From this time the country has gradually become deſert, ſo that hardly a veſtige of its antient fertility can be found. All the inhabitants, of whom very few are Jews, one of the lateſt travellers ſays do not exceed fifty thouſand.

Of the total diſperſion of the Jews into all the moſt diſtant parts of the world, every nation, and among them ourſelves, are witneſſes. For there is no country on the face of the earth in which Jews are not to be found. And among thoſe they have met with all the calamities predicted by Moſes. Wherever they have gone, the ſword has, indeed, followed them. We no where read of ſuch maſſacres as have been made of the Jews, eſpecially in all Chriſtian countries; and in conſequence of theſe events, they have been overwhelmed with dread and terror, fearful of every thing that can expoſe them to farther ill uſage, as we ſee at this day; ſo that far from ſhewing any eagerneſs to make proſelytes, as they were formerly wont to do, they carefully avoid making any, and give no encourage-

encouragement to the few who are diſpoſed to join them. They are alſo at this very time, and have been for ages, a proverb, and a by-word, among all nations, no people being expoſed to ſo much contempt and inſult, as well as cruel uſage of every other kind, as the Jews. How far they may have contributed to bring this ill uſage upon themſelves is not at all material to my purpoſe, the fact being indiſputably ſuch as Moſes predicted.

In this great diſperſion, the Jews have, in many caſes, openly abandoned the religion of their anceſtors, profeſſing it ſecretly, but concealing it with the greateſt care. This has been particularly the caſe with the Jews in Spain and Portugal, where many of them have not only made public profeſſion of Chriſtianity, but in that character have enjoyed high offices in the church, and even in the inquiſition; and yet when they have made their eſcape, they have renounced every badge of Chriſtianity, and gloried in their attachment to their own religion.

But moſt literally has this prophecy been fulfilled in the ten tribes, few of whom ever returned to Paleſtine, and not being at preſent diſtinguiſhed from other nations, they have, no doubt, adopted their idolatrous religions. It is not improbable, however, but that they ſomewhere form a diſtinct people, and that in due time their origin may be diſcovered. Some traces of them have of late appeared*. According to the ſure word of prophecy, they are to be brought back to the land of Canaan, as well as the Jews.

The literal fulfilment of theſe prophecies concerning the calamities, and total diſperſion, of the Iſraelites, muſt ſatisfy that nation, and in time all mankind, that Moſes was inſpired in delivering them. And therefore they have the fulleſt confidence in the accompliſhment of his other prophecies concerning their future reſtoration, and flouriſhing ſtate, which are as diſtinct

* Sir William Jones, with conſiderable probability, conjectures that the Afghans, a people living between Perſia and Indoſtan, are of Iſraelitiſh extraction.

and

and expreſs as thoſe concerning their calamities, and far more numerous. They are not only contained in Moſes, but the favourite ſubject is reſumed, enlarged upon, and ſet in a thouſand different lights, by Iſaiah, and moſt of the ſucceeding prophets. As this is a much more pleaſing ſubject than the former, and eſpecially as I flatter myſelf we are now drawing ſenſibly nearer to the accompliſhment of theſe prophecies, I ſhall recite a conſiderable number of them. You will find them equally clear and free from ambiguity, ſo that there can be no doubt concerning their meaning, and conſequently, if we believe in revelation, concerning their literal accompliſhment.

Moſes, who ſo expreſsly foretold the diſperſion of the Jews among the moſt diſtant nations of the world, ſays, Lev. xxvi, 44, *And yet for all this, when they ſhall be in the land of their enemies, I will not caſt them away, neither will I abhor them, to deſtroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them. I am the Lord their God, but will for their ſakes remember the covenant of their anceſtors, whom I brought forth*

forth out of the land of Egypt, in the ſight of the Heathen, that I might be their God, I am the Lord.

Having foretold the diſperſion of the Iſraelites into the moſt diſtant regions, he adds, Deut. iv. 29, 'But if from thence 'thou ſhalt ſeek the Lord thy God, thou 'ſhalt find him, if thou ſeek him with all 'thy heart, and with all thy ſoul. When 'thou art in tribulation, and all theſe things 'are come upon thee, even in the latter 'days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, 'and ſhalt be obedient to his voice (for the 'Lord thy God is a merciful God) he will 'not forſake thee, nor deſtroy thee, nor 'forget the covenant of thy fathers, which 'he ſware unto them. Ch. xxx. 1. And 'it ſhall come to paſs when all theſe things 'are come upon thee, the bleſſing and the 'curſe which I have ſet before thee, and 'thou ſhalt call them to mind, among all 'the nations whither the Lord thy God 'hath driven thee, and ſhalt return to the 'Lord thy God, and ſhalt obey his voice, 'according to all that I command thee this 'day, thou and thy children, with all thy 'heart,

'heart, and with all thy ſoul, that then 'the Lord thy God will turn thy capti- 'vity, and have compaſſion upon thee, and 'will return, and gather thee from all the 'nations whither the Lord thy God hath 'ſcattered thee. And if any of thine be 'driven out to the outermoſt part of heaven, 'from thence will the Lord thy God ga- 'ther thee, and from thence will he fetch 'thee. And the Lord will bring thee to 'the land which thy fathers poſſeſſed, and 'thou ſhalt poſſeſs it, and he will do thee 'good, and multiply thee above thy fathers.'

'That the future proſperity of the Iſraelites, though thus conditionally announced, will abſolutely take place, what follows clearly expreſſes. The nation will, in fact, become ſuch as the promiſe requires. 'And 'the Lord thy God will circumciſe thine 'heart, and the heart of thy ſeed, to love 'the Lord thy God with all thy heart, 'and with all thy ſoul, that thou mayeſt 'live.'

After Moſes we find no prophecy relating to this ſubject till we come to the latter times of the kings of Judah, about eight

eight hundred years before the Chriſtian æra. But they abound in the writings of Joel, Amos, Hoſea, Iſaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Obadiah, and Daniel, before the return from Babylon, and in thoſe of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, after it. To quote the whole of what theſe prophets ſay on this ſubject, would be to copy a great part, if not the greater part, of their prophecies. For the future flouriſhing ſtate of their nation is the great and favourite theme of all their writings. But as the ſubject is of particular importance, and appears to me not to have been ſufficiently attended to, or underſtood, by Chriſtians, who have ſuppoſed many of the prophecies to have been figurative, and to have been deſigned to expreſs the ſtate of the Chriſtian church, and not that of the Jewiſh nation, I ſhall recite a conſiderable number of the paſſages, to ſatisfy you they do not admit of any ſuch figurative interpretation.

You will obſerve, as I recite them, that the prophecies concerning the reſtoration of the Iſraelites to the land of Paleſtine are generally accompanied with predictions of the

the glorious ſtate of this extraordinary, though now deſpiſed and abject, nation, after their return, and alſo concerning the heavy judgments which will fall upon all the nations that have oppreſſed them, and eſpecially thoſe who ſhall oppoſe their return, or endeavour to diſturb them after it. You will clearly ſee, from the expreſs mention that is made of the quiet and undiſturbed enjoyment of their country, that is promiſed to the Iſraelites, that theſe prophecies were by no means fulfilled at the return from the Babyloniſh captivity.

The predictions concerning the return of the ten tribes is a farther evidence of the ſame thing; beſides that after their reſtoration all the twelve tribes are to make but one nation, and are to be governed by a prince of the houſe of David. Then alſo will be a time of univerſal peace and happineſs through all the world, all mankind becoming worſhippers of the one true God, and having the higheſt reſpect for his peculiar people, if not under ſome kind of ſubjection to them. I ſhall recite the paſſages according to the order of the time in

which they were delivered, and without intermixing many particular obſervations by way of illuſtration; for it will be ſeen, that they require none.

Amos ix. 14, 15. 'And I will bring again 'the captivity of my people Iſrael, and 'they ſhall build the waſte cities and in-'habit them, and they ſhall plant vine-'yards and drink the wine thereof. They 'ſhall alſo make gardens, and eat the fruit 'of them. And I will plant them upon 'their land, and they ſhall no more be pul-'led up out of their land which I have given 'them, ſaith the Lord thy God.'

Hoſea iii. 4. 'For the children of Iſrael 'ſhall abide many days without a king, 'and without a prince, and without an 'ephod, and without teraphim. After-'ward ſhall the children of Iſrael return, 'and ſeek the Lord their God, and David 'their king, and ſhall fear the Lord and 'his goodneſs in the latter days.'

Iſa. ii. 1. 'It ſhall come to paſs in the 'laſt days, that the mountain of the Lord's 'houſe ſhall be eſtabliſhed in the top of 'the mountains, and ſhall be exalted above

'the

'the hills, and all nations ſhall flow unto
'it. And many people ſhall go and ſay,
'Come ye, let us go up to the mountain
'of the Lord, to the houſe of the God of
'Jacob, and he will teach us his ways,
'and we will walk in his paths. For out
'of Zion ſhall go forth the law, and the
'word of the Lord from Jeruſalem. And
'he ſhall judge among the nations, and
'rebuke many people; and they ſhall beat
'their ſwords into ploughſhares, and their
'ſpears into pruning-hooks. Nation ſhall
'not lift up ſword againſt nation, neither
'ſhall they learn war any more.'

Iſa. xi. 10. 'And in that day there
'ſhall be a root of Jeſſe, which ſhall ſtand
'as an enſign for the people. To it ſhall
'the Gentiles ſeek, and his reſt ſhall be
'glorious. And it ſhall come to paſs in
'that day, that the Lord ſhall ſet his hand
'again the ſecond time to recover the rem-
'nant of his people, which ſhall be left
'from Aſſyria, and from Egypt, and from
'Pathros, and from Cuſh, and from Elam,
'and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and
'from the iſlands of the ſea. And he ſhall

'ſet up an enſign for the nations, and ſhall 'aſſemble the outcaſts of Iſrael, and gather 'together the diſperſed of Judah, from the 'four corners of the earth. The envy alſo 'of Ephraim ſhall depart, and the adver-'ſaries of Judah ſhall be cut off. Ephraim 'ſhall not envy Judah, and Judah ſhall not 'vex Ephraim.'

Iſa. xliii. 5. 'Fear not, for I am with 'thee. I will bring thy ſeed from the eaſt, 'and gather thee from the weſt. I will 'ſay to the north, Give up; and to the 'ſouth, Keep not back. Bring my ſons 'from far, and my daughters from the ends 'of the earth.'

The regard that God retains for his antient people during their diſperſion, is thus beautifully repreſented by this prophet, Ch. xlix. 14. 'But Zion ſaid, Jehovah 'hath forſaken me, and my Lord hath 'forgotten me. Can a woman forget her 'ſucking child, that ſhe ſhould not have 'compaſſion on the ſon of her womb? 'Yea they may forget, yet will I not for-'get thee. Behold I have graven thee on 'the palms of my hands. Thy walls are

'continually

'continually before me. Ver. 22, Thus
'ſaith the Lord God, Behold I will lift up
'my hand to the Gentiles, and ſet up my
'ſtandard to the people, and they ſhall
'bring thy ſons in their arms, and thy
'daughters ſhall be carried upon their
'ſhoulders. And kings ſhall be thy nurſ-
'ing fathers, and queens thy nurſing mo-
'thers. They ſhall bow down to thee
'with their faces to the earth, and lick up
'the duſt of thy feet, and thou ſhalt know
'that I am the Lord. For they ſhall not
'be aſhamed that wait for me. Shall the
'prey be taken from the mighty, or the
'lawful captive be delivered. But thus
'ſaith the Lord, Even the captives of the
'mighty ſhall be taken away, and the prey
'of the terrible ſhall be delivered. For I
'will contend with him that contendeth
'with thee, and I will ſave thy children.
'And I will feed them that oppreſs thee
'with their own fleſh, and they ſhall be
'drunken with their own blood, as with
'ſweet wine, and all fleſh ſhall know that
'I, Jehovah, am thy Saviour, and thy re-
'deemer, the mighty one of Jacob.'

The calamities and the diſperſion of the Jews have been of long continuance; but, according to the following repreſentation, all their ſufferings will bear but a ſmall proportion to their future glory and happineſs. Iſa. liv. 'Thy Maker is thine huſband, 'the Lord of hoſts is his name, and thy 'redeemer the holy one of Iſrael; the God 'of the whole earth ſhall he be called. For 'the Lord hath called thee as a woman 'forſaken, and grieved in ſpirit, and a wife 'of youth, when thou waſt refuſed, ſaith 'thy God. For a ſmall moment have I 'forſaken thee, but with great mercies will 'I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid 'my face from thee, for a moment, but 'with everlaſting kindneſs will I have 'mercy on thee, ſaith the Lord thy re-'deemer.'

Iſa. lx. 4. 'Lift thine eyes round 'about, and ſee all they gather themſelves 'together. They come to thee. Thy 'ſons ſhall come from far, and thy daugh-'ters ſhall be nurſed at thy ſide. Ver. 9, 'Who are theſe that fly as a cloud, and as 'doves to their windows? Surely the iſles

'ſhall

'ſhall wait for me, and the ſhips of Tar-
'ſhiſh firſt, to bring thy ſons from far,
'their ſilver and their gold with them,
'unto the name of Jehovah thy God, and
'to the holy one of Iſrael, becauſe he hath
'glorified thee. And the ſons of ſtrangers
'ſhall build up thy walls, and their kings
'ſhall miniſter unto thee; for in my wrath
'I ſmote thee, but in my favour have I
'had mercy on thee. Therefore thy gates
'ſhall be open continually, they ſhall not
'be ſhut day nor night, that men may
'bring unto thee the forces' (wealth) 'of
'the Gentiles, and that their kings may be
'brought. For the nation or kingdom
'that will not ſerve thee ſhall periſh, yea
'thoſe nations ſhall be utterly waſted. The
'glory of Lebanon ſhall come unto thee,
'the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box to-
'gether, to beautify the place of my ſanc-
'tuary; and I will make the place of my
'feet glorious. The ſons alſo of them
'that afflicted thee ſhall come bending unto
'thee, and all they that deſpiſed thee ſhall
'bow down themſelves at the ſoles of thy
'feet, and they ſhall call thee the city of

'Jehovah, the Zion of the holy one of Iſrael.
'Whereas thou haſt been forſaken and
'hated, ſo that no man went through
'thee, I will make thee an eternal excel-
'lency, a joy of many generations. Thou
'ſhalt alſo ſuck the milk of the Gentiles,
'and ſhalt ſuck the breaſt of kings, and
'thou ſhalt know that I Jehovah am thy
'Saviour, and thy redeemer, the mighty
'one of Jacob.'

Zeph. iii. 19, 20. 'Behold at that time
'I will undo all that afflict thee, and will
'ſave her that halteth, and gather her that
'was driven out, and I will get them praiſe
'and fame in every land where they have
'been put to ſhame. At that time will I bring
'you again, even in the time that I gather
'you. For I will make you a name, and
'a praiſe, among all people of the earth,
'when I turn back your captivity before
'your eyes, ſaith the Lord.'

Jer. xvi. 14. 'Therefore behold the
'days come, ſaith the Lord, that it ſhall no
'more be ſaid, The Lord liveth that brought
'up the children of Iſrael out of the land of
'Egypt, but the Lord liveth that brought

'up

'up the children of Iſrael from the land of the 'north, and from all the lands whither he had 'driven them; and I will bring them again 'into their land, which I gave unto their 'fathers.'

Jer. xxx. 3. 'For lo the days come, 'ſaith the Lord, that I will bring again the 'captivity of my people Iſrael, and Judah, 'ſaith the Lord, and I will cauſe them to 'return to the land that I gave to their fa-'thers, and they ſhall poſſeſs it. Ver. 10, 'Therefore fear not, O my ſervant Jacob, 'ſaith the Lord, neither be diſmayed O 'Iſrael; for lo I will ſave thee from afar, 'and thy ſeed from the land of their cap-'tivity, and Jacob ſhall return, and be in 'reſt and quiet, and none ſhall make him 'afraid. For I am with thee, ſaith the 'Lord, to ſave thee. Though I make a 'full end of all nations whither I have ſcat-'tered thee, yet will I not make a full end 'of thee, but I will correct thee in mea-'ſure, and will not leave thee altogether 'unpuniſhed.'

Ezek. xxviii. 25. 'Thus ſaith the 'Lord God, When I ſhall have gathered

'the houſe of Iſrael from the people among 'whom they are ſcattered, and ſhall be 'ſanctified in them, in the ſight of the 'heathen, then ſhall they dwell in their 'land that I have given to my ſervant Ja-'cob. And they ſhall dwell ſafely therein, 'and ſhall build houſes, and plant vine-'yards; yea they ſhall dwell with confi-'dence, when I have executed judgments 'upon all thoſe that deſpiſe them round 'about; and they ſhall know that I am 'Jehovah their God.'

The change of character that will take place in the Iſraelites in general, without which they could not be proper objects of the Divine favour, is foretold, and happily expreſſed, by this prophet, Ch. xxxvi. 25. 'For I will take you from among the 'Heathen, and gather you out of all coun-'tries, and will bring you into your own 'land. Then will I ſprinkle clean water 'upon you, and ye ſhall be clean. From all 'your filthineſs, and from all your idols, 'will I cleanſe you. A new heart alſo 'will I give you, and a new ſpirit will I 'put within you; and I will take away the

'ſtony

'ſtony heart out of your fleſh, and I will 'give you a heart of fleſh, and I will put 'my ſpirit within you, and cauſe you to 'walk in my ſtatutes, and ye ſhall keep 'my judgments and do them. And ye 'ſhall dwell in the land that I gave to your 'fathers, and ye ſhall be my people, and I 'will be your God. Ver. 31, Then ſhall 'ye remember your own evil ways and 'your doings that were not good, and ſhall 'loath yourſelves in your own ſight for 'your iniquities, and for your abomina-'tions. Ver. 36, Then the Heathen that 'are left round about you ſhall know that I 'the Lord build the ruined places, and plant 'that which was deſolate. I the Lord have 'ſpoken it. I will do it.'

Ezek. xxxvii. 21, &c. 'Thus ſaith 'the Lord God, Behold I will take the 'children of Iſrael from among the Heathen 'whither they be gone, and will gather 'them on every ſide, and bring them into 'their own land. And I will make them 'one nation in the land upon the moun-'tains of Iſrael, and one king ſhall be king 'to them all, and they ſhall no more be

'two nations, neither ſhall they be divided 'into two kingdoms any more at all. Ver. 26, 'Moreover I will make a covenant of peace 'with them. It ſhall be an everlaſting 'covenant with them, and I will place 'them, and multiply them, and will ſet 'my ſanctuary in the midſt of them for 'evermore. My tabernacle alſo ſhall be 'with them; yea I will be their God, 'and they ſhall be my people. And the 'Heathen ſhall know that I the Lord do 'ſanctify Iſrael, when my ſanctuary ſhall 'be in the midſt of them for evermore.'

The prophets from whoſe writings theſe extracts are made lived before, or during, the captivity at Babylon; but thoſe whoſe writings I ſhall now proceed to quote lived after it. They muſt therefore refer to ſome event that was then foreſeen, and it is evident that it is future ſtill.

Zech. viii. 13. 'And it ſhall come to 'paſs, that as ye were a curſe among the 'Heathen, O houſe of Judah, and houſe 'of Iſrael, ſo will I ſave you, and ye ſhall 'be a bleſſing. Fear not, but let your 'hands be ſtrong. For thus ſaith the 'Lord

'Lord of hoſts, As I thought to puniſh
'you when your fathers provoked me to
'wrath, ſaith the Lord of hoſts, and I re-
'pented not; ſo again have I thought in
'theſe days to do well unto Jeruſalem,
'and to the houſe of Judah. Fear ye
'not. Ver. 20, Thus ſaith the Lord of
'hoſts, It ſhall yet come to paſs, that
'there ſhall come people, and the inhabi-
'tants of many cities. And the inhabi-
'tants of one city ſhall go to another,
'ſaying, Let us go ſpeedily to pray before
'the Lord, and to ſeek the Lord of hoſts.
'I will go alſo. Yea many people, and
'ſtrong nations, ſhall come to ſeek the
'Lord of hoſts in Jeruſalem, and to pray
'before the Lord. Thus ſaith the Lord
'of hoſts, In thoſe days it ſhall come to
'paſs, that ten men out of all languages
'of the nations, even ſhall take hold of the
'ſkirt of him that is a Jew, ſaying, We
'will go with you, for we have heard that
'God is with you.'

Zech. xii. 9, 10. 'And it ſhall come to
'paſs in that day, that I will ſeek to de-
'ſtroy all the nations that come againſt

'Jeruſalem. And I will pour upon the 'houſe of David, and upon the inhabitants 'of Jeruſalem, the ſpirit of grace and of 'ſupplication, and they ſhall look on him 'whom they have pierced, and ſhall mourn 'for him as one that mourneth for his 'only ſon, and ſhall be in bitterneſs for 'him as one that is in bitterneſs for his 'firſtborn.'

This paſſage is particularly remarkable, as it ſeems to imply the repentance and regret of the Iſraelitiſh nation for the crucifixion of Jeſus, and conſequently their converſion to chriſtianity. But this will probably be an event ſubſequent to their return to Paleſtine.

The ſame prophet Zechariah, ſpeaking of Jeruſalem, ſays, Ch. xiv. 11. 'And 'men ſhall dwell in it, and there ſhall be 'no more utter deſtruction, but Jeruſalem 'ſhall be ſafely inhabited. And it ſhall be 'that every one that is left of all the na-'tions which came againſt Jeruſalem ſhall 'even go up from year to year to worſhip 'the King, the Lord of hoſts, and to keep 'the feaſt of tabernacles. And it ſhall be

'that

'that whoſo will not come up, of all the 'families of the earth, unto Jeruſalem, to 'worſhip the King, the Lord of hoſts, even 'upon them ſhall be no rain. And if the 'family of Egypt, that have no rain, go 'not up, and come not, there ſhall be the 'plague wherewith the Lord will ſmite 'the Heathen that come not up to keep 'the feaſt of tabernacles. This ſhall be 'the puniſhment of Egypt, and of all na-'tions that come not up to keep the feaſt 'of tabernacles.'

Mal. iii. 1. 'Behold I will ſend my 'meſſenger, and he ſhall prepare the way 'before me, and the Lord whom ye ſeek 'ſhall ſuddenly come to his temple, even 'the meſſenger of the covenant whom ye 'delight in. But who may abide the day 'of his coming, and who ſhall ſtand when 'he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's 'fire, and like fuller's ſoap. And he ſhall 'ſit as a refiner and purifier of ſilver, and 'he ſhall purify the ſons of Levi, and 'purge them as gold and ſilver, that they 'may offer unto the Lord an offering in 'righteouſneſs. Then ſhall the offering

'of

'of Judah and Jeruſalem be pleaſant unto 'the Lord, as in the days of old, and as 'in former years. Ver. 12, And all na-'tions ſhall call ye bleſſed, for ye ſhall 'be a delightſome land, ſaith the Lord of 'hoſts.'

With what feelings muſt pious Jews, in their preſent diſperſed and oppreſſed ſtate, meditate on ſuch predictions as theſe that I have now read to you; and theſe, I may truly ſay, are not perhaps an hundredth part of what their prophets have delivered to them on this ſubject. For it is the great burden of all their writings. How muſt they be impreſſed with the idea of their nation being the choſen people of God, when they can trace their origin (which no other nation is able to do) from the firſt of the human race; when they can review all the wonderful diſpenſations of providence reſpecting them; when they now find themſelves in the very ſituation that Moſes predicted more than three thouſand years ago, and therefore cannot entertain a doubt concerning the ſtate of high pre-eminence over all other nations, which is

with

with no leſs clearneſs promiſed to them in future time? Can we wonder at the firmneſs of the faith of the Jews, and at their adherence to their religion, when they are continually reading ſuch prophecies as I have read to you? Can we wonder even at their pride, and undue contempt of all other nations? Who would not be proud of ſo illuſtrious a deſcent, and ſo glorious a deſtination as they alone can boaſt of? How little is the impreſſion that the contempt of the world muſt have on ſuch a people as this? To them it muſt be conſidered as the inſolence of beggars to princes in diſguiſe. To correct this pride, the moſt enlarged views, ſuch as have not yet opened to them, are neceſſary; viz. that their God is as much the God and the father of all the human race, as he is theirs, and that all pre-eminence, under his government, has for its real object, not the advantage of any part, though ſeemingly the moſt favoured, but of the whole of his family; and therefore, though the Iſraelites will be eminently diſtinguiſhed and happy, it is only as the means of bleſſing

all

all the race of mankind, far more numerous, and therefore, in the eye of God, far more important than they.

We cannot wonder at the antient prophets, or rather the ſpirit by which they were inſpired, dwelling ſo much on the ſubject of the future reſtoration of the Jews, when we conſider that it is the great cataſtrophe to which tend all the diſpenſations of Providence, not to the Jews only, but to the whole world; when we conſider that, by means of this one choſen nation, all mankind are to be brought to the knowledge, worſhip, and obedience, of the one true God, and that thus virtue, peace, and happineſs, will become univerſal and uninterrupted.

In attending to the prophecies that I have recited, you muſt have been particularly ſtruck, as I have been (and not without ſerious apprehenſions for ourſelves of this nation) with the plain intimations of the heavy judgments that are denounced againſt every nation that has oppreſſed the Jews. For the Engliſh in former ages have not been the moſt favourably diſpoſed

towards this choſen people, but have, in the moſt barbarous manner, and without the leaſt colour of reaſon or juſtice, maſſacred great numbers of them.

Theſe intimations concerning the fate of the nations who ſhould oppreſs the Iſraelites in their diſperſion are as old as Moſes. Having forewarned his countrymen of the judgments that would befal them in caſe of diſobedience, under the form of *curſes*, he ſays, Deut. xxx. 7. *The Lord thy God will put all theſe curſes upon thine enemies, and upon them that hate thee, which perſecuted thee.*

We may ſay that we, of this generation, have not perſecuted the Jews, and that they have no particular reaſon to complain of *us*. But they were grievouſly perſecuted by the Engliſh nation in former times, and have much to complain of *them*; and it is agreeable to the plan of Divine Providence, to puniſh nations and families as ſuch, though the guilt was contracted in a remote period, and conſequently the puniſhment falls upon the innocent. Of this we have many inſtances

in

in the ſcripture hiſtory. The judgments pronounced againſt Jeroboam, Baaſha, and Ahab, did not fall upon themſelves, but upon their poſterity in the fourth generation. Joaſh, the great grandſon of Ahab, was ſlain in the field of Naboth, as Ahab's own blood was licked by dogs in the ſame place. The ſufferings of the Jews at this day were occaſioned by their ſins and apoſtaſy in very remote ages.

There are no judgments more diſtinctly announced than thoſe that are to fall upon the power that is denominated *Babylon*, the *man of ſin*, and *antichriſt*, which all Proteſtants interpret, and I doubt not very juſtly, of the popes and the church of Rome. But whenever thoſe judgments take place, (and the time is perhaps near) it is almoſt certain that the actual pope, and the court of Rome in general, will be much leſs deſerving of puniſhment than many preceding popes, and former courts of Rome.

We muſt be content to wait till the plan of Divine Providence be more clearly unfolded, before we can form any proper judgment concerning it. In time we ſhall,

I doubt

I doubt not, be convinced that any other mode of proceeding would have been leſs productive of happineſs on the whole. If ſo, the preſent meaſures muſt be pronounced wiſe and good; and if *benevolence* be ſatisfied, *juſtice* will have no reaſon to complain.

In the mean time, conſidering theſe very imperfect views of things, it becomes us to look principally to our own ſentiments and conduct, and to be careful to ſuppreſs within ourſelves every affection or ſentiment that can, directly or indirectly, lead to perſecution, whether of Jews or Chriſtians, and to endeavour as far as we can to aſſiſt our perſecuted brethren, lightening the burdens that are impoſed by others. Then, whether we be preſerved in general calamities, or be involved in the fate of the guilty, the time will come when a proper diſtinction will be made between thoſe who now ſuffer juſtly, and unjuſtly. But *if the righteous ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the ungodly and the ſinner appear?*

DISCOURSE IX.

Of the Miracles of Jeſus.

Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher ſent from God: For no man can do thoſe miracles which thou doſt, except God be with him.

JOHN iii. 2.

IT is not a little remarkable, that from the time of the captivity in Babylon to that of Chriſt, a period of ſix hundred years, there did not appear among the Jews any perſon who pretended to work a miracle; nor was there among them any one who pretended to the gift of prophecy from the time of Malachi, which was about four hundred years before Chriſt. This is a ſufficient proof that the Jews were not a credulous nation. For had they been diſpoſed to believe in miracles, or prophecy, perſons enow would have ariſen to take advan-

tage of that diſpoſition, as was the caſe with the Catholics for many centuries. In proportion to the credulity of ſome, have always been the arts of impoſition in others. This remarkable fact demonſtrates a general dread in the Jewiſh nation of aſſuming the prophetic character without authority. Whatever liberties of other kinds they might take with reſpect to morality, this ſpecies of impiety was not among them.

From theſe circumſtances it may be taken for granted, that pretenſions to miracles among Jews were ſure of being rigorouſly ſcrutinized, ſo that they would not obtain credit unleſs the facts were indiſputable. This would have been the caſe had the object of the miracles even been any thing favourable to their religion, and to their wiſhes; but much more ſo if it had been any thing that they did not wiſh to favour. And in this predicament was Jeſus when he firſt aſſumed the character of a perſon ſent from God, and impowered to work miracles, in proof of his divine miſſion.

The only perſon whom the Jews expected in the character of a prophet, preceded by Elijah, they alſo expected in the character of a king, viz. their promiſed *Meſſiah*, the perſon announced under that title by Daniel, as to *come in the clouds of heaven*, with power and great glory. And it is remarkable that about the time of the appearance of Jeſus there was a general expectation of the ſpeedy coming of this Meſſiah. But they naturally imagined that he would be a great prince, who would reſcue their nation from their ſubjection to the Romans, and bring all the world into ſubjection to them.

Had any perſon aſſumed *this* character, it is not impoſſible, but that the Jewiſh nation, prejudiced as they were, might have been diſpoſed to favour his pretenſions, and have been leſs ſcrupulous in their examination of the proofs of his miſſion. But Jeſus made no ſuch pretenſions. He never, indeed, denied that he was the Meſſiah; but his appearance by no means correſponded to their ideas of him. He did not come in the clouds; and ſo far was he

from aſſuming kingly power or ſtate, that he was brought up a common carpenter; he choſe his companions from perſons of an equally low rank with himſelf; and he declined all particular intercourſe with the chiefs of his nation. Beſides the meanneſs of his parentage and education, the place of his nativity (at leaſt that from which he received his denomination) was a deſpicable town in Galilee, a part of the country which was thought meanly of, compared with Judea properly ſo called.

The only advantage that Jeſus, previous to his appearing in a public character had, was his being announced by John the Baptiſt as a great prophet, one much greater than himſelf, and one who would work miracles. For this ſeems to be implied in his ſaying that *he would baptize with the Holy Spirit.* This circumſtance would, no doubt, excite great attention to Jeſus, and a favourable one; and had he appeared in the character that they confidently expected their promiſed Meſſiah would aſſume, he might with ſomewhat more eaſe have impoſed upon them. But this advan-

tage only reſpected the common people, who regarded John as a true prophet. By the chief prieſts and rulers of the nation, to whom John had paid no court, he was regarded in a much leſs favourable light. Nothing, therefore, that John had ſaid, or done, would diſpoſe them to give Jeſus a more favourable reception; but on the contrary would lead them to regard him with a jealous eye. And this jealouſy was ſoon inflamed to hatred and the blackeſt malignity, though he performed miracles which they could not deny to be ſuch, as ſoon as he appeared, like John, to pay no court to *them*, but on the contrary openly to expoſe their hypocriſy and other vices, and to denounce the judgments of God againſt them. In this ſtate of open oppoſition to all perſons in poſſeſſion of power, and alſo to all the learned and moſt intelligent perſons in the country, the conduct of Jeſus would, no doubt, be moſt narrowly watched; and any thing in him looking like artifice could not fail to have been expoſed, and he would have been puniſhed as an impoſtor and a blaſphemer.

Notwith-

Notwithſtanding theſe deep-rooted prejudices, and theſe great diſadvantages, the miracles of Jeſus were ſo numerous, and ſo conſpicuous, that no doubt was entertained of them. Great numbers openly avowed themſelves to be his diſciples, and even received him as their promiſed Meſſiah; and they whoſe prejudices would not ſuffer them to acknowledge *this*, did not deny his miracles, but aſcribed them to ſome other cauſe than the power of God.

Let us, then, conſider the circumſtances of miracles which produced ſo wonderful an effect; and we ſhall find that, extraordinary as it was, the cauſe was equal to it. The miracles were ſo circumſtanced, that it was impoſſible to ſuſpect that there was any impoſition in the caſe. As Nicodemus acknowledged, no man could have done the things that Jeſus did, if God had not been with him.

1. The number of the miracles performed by Jeſus was beyond all example in any preceding time, even thoſe of Moſes and Elijah, if we except the ſtanding miracle of the deſcent of the manna, which was

repeated every day (excepting the ſabbath) during forty years. Now an impoſtor, ſo narrowly watched as Jeſus muſt have known himſelf to be, and without aſſiſtants, as he muſt have been at leaſt at the firſt, would never have attempted ſo many miracles, from the certainty of his being detected in ſome of them, though he ſhould have ſucceeded in others; and a ſingle failure would have been ſufficient to expoſe the whole ſcheme.

Notwithſtanding this, Jeſus appears never to have omitted a ſingle opportunity of performing the benevolent miracle of curing diſeaſes of every kind, whoever applied to him for that purpoſe. With artful management a ſingle perſon, or a few perſons, might appear to be blind, or lame, and ſuddenly to recover their ſight, or the uſe of their limbs, when commanded ſo to do; but Jeſus made no exception to any kind of diſeaſe; and what is much more extraordinary, any *maim*, or the total want of any limb. This was far too bold for the moſt artful and practiſed impoſtor to have undertaken. That ſo impudent

impudent an attempt as this ſhould have ſucceeded, in ſuch peculiarly unfavourable circumſtances, and to the extent that all hiſtory, and the preſent ſtate of things, ſhews that it did ſucceed, would be a greater miracle than any that are recorded by the evangeliſts.

It is probable that but few of the miracles performed by Jeſus are recorded in the hiſtories we have of him. All the evangeliſts allude to great numbers not ſpecified by them, and they ſeem to have ſelected only the more remarkable of them: yet in the hiſtory of little more than one year (for the public miniſtry of Jeſus did not extend beyond this ſhort period) they particularly mention the following, probably only as more diſtinguiſhed by their circumſtances than the reſt. Of *lepers*, mention is made of one who met him at the foot of the mountain on which he had delivered the diſcourſe of which we have an account in Matthew and Luke; and of ten who applied to him at the ſame time, one of whom was a Samaritan. Of a *fever* he cured Peter's wife's mother at Capernaum, and a nobleman's

nobleman's ſon of the ſame place, when he was at a diſtance. Of *blind* men there was one whom he met near Bethſaida; another, who had been blind from his birth, at Jeruſalem; and two near to Jericho. Of the *palſy* he cured a centurion's ſervant at Capernaum before he came to the houſe. Another paralytic perſon was brought to him on a bed, and let down through the roof of the houſe where he was; and one perſon he cured of a withered hand in a ſynagogue on the ſabbath day.

Of *demoniacs*, or inſane perſons, he cured one in a ſynagogue at Capernaum, the miracle which firſt excited the particular attention of the public to him; another who was raging mad, and wholly intractable, in Gadara; another who, beſides being inſane, was both blind and dumb, preſently after the calling of the twelve apoſtles. In this caſe he alſo relieved the daughter of a Syrophenician woman; and another young perſon at the foot of the mount of transfiguration. And incidental mention is made of his having cured Mary Magdalene, who had been grievouſly afflicted in this way,

as

as it is ſaid that *ſeven demons* had been caſt out of her.

He inſtantly cured a woman who had a bloody iſſue of many years continuance, as he was going to the houſe of Jairus in Capernaum; another woman who had been infirm eighteen years in a public ſynagogue; a lame man at the pool of Bethesda in Jeruſalem; one who was deaf, and had an impediment in his ſpeech, on his return from his excurſion to the coaſts of Tyre and Sydon; a perſon who had a dropſy at the houſe of a chief phariſee, Luke xiv. 1. and he cured the wound made by Peter in ſtriking off the ear of the High Prieſt's ſervant.

But more aſtoniſhing than the cure of any diſeaſe was his raiſing perſons from the dead, of whom three are particularly mentioned, viz. the daughter of Jairus at Capernaum, the widow's ſon at Nain, and Lazarus at Bethany.

Beſides theſe miracles of healing, there were others of a benevolent nature, as his changing a quantity of water into wine at a marriage feaſt in Cana; and his feeding

firſt five thouſand, and afterwards four thouſand, with a ſmall quantity of proviſions.

All the miracles of Jeſus were not, however, of this kind. Some of them ſeem calculated to ſhew his power over nature in general, as his ſtilling a tempeſt, his walking on the ſea, his enabling Peter to do the ſame, and his cauſing a barren fig-tree to wither in the courſe of a night.

Other miracles are recorded in the hiſtory of Jeſus in which he does not appear to have been the agent, as in the voices from heaven, of which there were three inſtances; the firſt at his baptiſm, probably in the hearing of many perſons, when the following words were diſtinctly pronounced, *This is my beloved ſon in whom I am well pleaſed.* The ſame words were pronounced on the mount of transfiguration, in the hearing of Peter, James, and John. The laſt was in the temple, when, in anſwer to his prayer in which he ſaid, *Father glorify thy name*, the ſupernatural voice ſaid, *I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.*

Some

Some of the miracles of Jeſus, if they may be ſo called, were of a prophetical nature, as his telling Peter where he ſhould find a large draught of fiſhes, and a piece of money in a fiſh's mouth; his telling his diſciples where they ſhould find an aſs on which he might ride to Jeruſalem, and a perſon who ſhould ſhew them a proper place where he might eat his laſt paſſover; but eſpecially his wonderfully exact prediction concerning the deſtruction of Jeruſalem and the temple, to take place within that generation. To theſe may be added his foretelling the powers that would be conferred on his apoſtles, and their ſucceſs in preaching the goſpel.

All theſe miracles, however, extraordinary as they are, were as nothing in compariſon of the prediction of Jeſus concerning his own death, and reſurrection, within a limited time, together with his aſcenſion above the clouds, in the preſence of a great number of his diſciples.

What kind of a man muſt he have been, to have undertaken all this, in the circumſtances in which Jeſus was, without any conſciouſneſs

conſciouſneſs of ſupernatural aſſiſtance, and depending only upon his art and addreſs? Certainly he could not have been in the poſſeſſion of his right mind, and therefore his impudent pretenſions would ſoon have been expoſed, and he would have ſuffered as an impoſtor. Let any man at this day, a man the moſt practiſed in the arts of impoſture, undertake a hundredth part of what Jeſus did, and ſee what would be his fate; and it would have been infinitely more hazardous in the caſe of Jeſus among the Jews.

2. The cures that Jeſus undertook to perform, which was always *immediately*, were, in general, of ſuch a nature, that there was the leaſt proſpect of preſent relief, as fevers, palſies, leproſy, dropſy, blindneſs, and eſpecially inſanity. For when theſe caſes are curable by medical treatment, it is always in a courſe of time, and never ſuddenly; and in no caſe was the cure left imperfect, ſo as to require a ſecond application. Even when the daughter of Jairus was raiſed to life, ſhe was not left in a languiſhing condition, ſo as to require time for her

her perfect recovery, but was immediately capable of eating. The young man whom Jeſus reſtored to life as they were carrying him to his grave, immediately roſe up, and he delivered him to his mother; and Lazarus, who had lain in the grave four days, was looſed, and his *being let go* implied his being capable of walking. In all the caſes, therefore, the perſons were not only recovered from a ſtate of death, but reſtored to health and vigour.

3. The ſcale, as I may ſay, on which ſeveral of the miracles of Jeſus were performed, was much too large to admit the ſuſpicion of artifice. This more eſpecially applies to the caſe of feeding the five and the four thouſand; and in a great degree to the changing ſo great a quantity of water, much more than any man could carry, into wine. No impoſtor would have attempted any thing of the kind. To ſubſtitute a ſingle glaſs of wine for one of water, or as much bread, or any kind of eatable, as a man could carry about him, and for a time conceal, might be practicable. But to provide wine for a large company,

pany, and bread and fiſh to ſuffice ſeveral thouſand perſons, and thoſe after they had long faſted, and this in a deſert, in the open air, where no ſuch ſupply could either have been procured, or ſecreted, was beyond all the power of legerdemain. Beſides, it is evident from the whole ſtory, which is related with the moſt perfect ſimplicity, that Jeſus had no aſſiſtants; the apoſtles themſelves having no knowledge of what he intended, and expreſſing their ſurpriſe at his propoſal in the moſt artleſs manner.

4. It is equally evident that, in the greater part of his miracles, Jeſus could not have availed himſelf of any aſſiſtance, and that there could not have been any colluſion between him and the perſons on whom he operated. The diſeaſed perſons were uſually preſented to him as they happened to come in his way, and the cures were frequently performed in the preſence of enemies, who would be attentive, we cannot doubt, to every circumſtance that could afford any handle for ſuſpicion.

The man who had been blind from his birth was known to have been ſo by his parents,

parents, whoſe teſtimony was extorted from them in a court of judicature. Of the ten lepers who were cured at one time, nine did not ſo much as return to give him thanks; whereas an impoſtor would, no doubt, have engaged them all, not only to return, but to accompany him in his future progreſs, as trophies of his power. But in no one inſtance was this the caſe with Jeſus. In him there was nothing of that oſtentation, which is inſeparable from the character of an impoſtor; who would naturally endeavour to make the moſt of every feat that he could contrive to exhibit with ſucceſs. The demoniacs that Jeſus reſtored to the uſe of their underſtanding had, in general, been long known to all the neighbourhood to have been really inſane, and incurably ſo, eſpecially that in Gadara.

Can it be ſuppoſed that the young daughter of Jairus, the widow's ſon (in a place where Jeſus was, to all appearance, a perfect ſtranger) or Lazarus, who had been in his grave four days, many mourners from Jeruſalem, evidently no friends of Jeſus, attending all

the time, only counterfeited death, to favour his views? In the laſt caſe Jeſus was at a conſiderable diſtance when Lazarus died, and the whole hiſtory is ſo circumſtantially and naturally related, as to vouch for its own truth. Beſides, in the preſence of ſo many enemies, what could the aſſiſtance of his apoſtles, had they been on the ſpot from the beginning, have availed him?

How could Jeſus have contrived, by any aſſiſtants, to produce a voice that ſhould appear to come from heaven, with the farther appearance of the *heavens opening*, and ſomething lighting upon his head. And, though on one of the occaſions of a voice from heaven, Jeſus was in the temple, it could not, at the moſt, have been more than under a portico; and as the place was always crowded, and the different apartments above him, or any where elſe, were not at his diſpoſal, any attempt at an impoſition in ſuch a place as this, muſt have been deſperate in the extreme.

But that there was no colluſion between Jeſus and the apoſtles, is moſt evident from the

the hiſtory of Judas, who betrayed him to his enemies. If there had been any colluſion, he muſt have been privy to it, or have ſeen reaſon to ſuſpect it; for, as far as appears, he had the ſame opportunity of knowing the ſecrets of the little fraternity as any other of the company, and yet he not only acknowledged the perfect innocence of Jeſus, but, from remorſe for what he had done, went and hanged himſelf.

5. With reſpect to many of the miracles of Jeſus, it is evident that no human aſſiſtance could have availed him at all, as in ſtilling the tempeſt, walking on the ſea, and cauſing the barren fig-tree to wither in a night. No knowledge that we *now* have of the powers of nature could encourage any perſon to attempt any thing of the kind, eſpecially the two firſt.

It may, indeed, be ſaid that the man with his aſs, or with the pitcher of water, might have been in the places where the diſciples would find them by particular appointment; but this could not have been the caſe with the fiſh that had the piece of

money in his mouth. And how could Jeſus have ſo peremptorily foretold Peter's denial of him, contrary to his own fixed reſolution? Will any one ſay that when the lives of both were in ſuch imminent danger, they had agreed to ſay, and do, what they did? But more eſpecially, by what human means of any kind could Jeſus have been enabled to foretel ſo particularly as he did the fate of Judea, Jeruſalem, and the temple, forty years before the event, when no other perſon had any apprehenſions of the kind. The modern Jews pretend that he did it by his interpretation of the prophecy of Daniel. But how came Jeſus to be more ſagacious in the interpretation of prophecy than even the moſt learned Jews, the ſcribes and Phariſees of his time?

I ſhall now make a few obſervations of a more general nature on the improbability of ſuch men as Jeſus, and his firſt followers, being impoſtors. If we only conſider their condition, and education, we may be convinced that they were by no means likely to come within the influence of ſuch *ambition*,

bition, as would have been neceſſary to their undertaking ſo complicated a piece of impoſture as they are charged with. They were, with few exceptions, and thoſe not of the moſt conſpicuous among them, men of low and laborious, though not of ignoble, occupations. Alſo the youngeſt of them was probably turned thirty, which was the caſe of Jeſus himſelf. Peter, who took the lead among them, was probably much older. Conſequently, they were men who had acquired habits of induſtry. They had alſo ſome little property, for they could make a merit of abandoning it when they became the followers of Jeſus, and they were evidently ſober and pious men. They were men who had had no commerce with the more elevated and ſplendid part of the world, ſo as to be faſcinated by its charms, nor were they inſtigated to make deſperate attempts to repair ruined fortues, which is the caſe with moſt adventurers.

Neither Jeſus, nor any of his aſſociates, had any more knowledge of nature, or philoſophy, than their neighbours; nor were

they men of ſuperior ability; and from their ignorance of the world they were little likely to think of ever going beyond the bounds of their own country. What figure could a carpenter, followed by fiſhermen, or huſbandmen, expect to make even in Jeruſalem, and much leſs in the principal cities of the Roman empire, where after the death of Jeſus we chiefly find them, ſuch as Antioch, Epheſus, Athens, Corinth, and Rome itſelf?

For men in their originally low ſituation and ſcanty knowledge, and who, as Jews, could not but know that they laboured under greater diſadvantage than perſons of any other nation, to entertain the idea of making ſuch a revolution in the world as they actually effected, and which they would ſoon find could not take place to any purpoſe till long after their deaths, muſt have been inſanity in the extreme. It was to undertake to do, without ſuperior ability or ſuperior means, what the greateſt philoſophers in the moſt learned nations had not attempted; viz. to perſuade men to abandon the rites of their religion, abſurd indeed,

indeed, but what they had received from their anceſtors, and which had been derived to them from the moſt remote antiquity, and on the obſervance of which they imagined the proſperity of their ſeveral ſtates depended. The ſcheme of perſuading even their countrymen to abandon the flattering idea of a conquering Meſſiah, an idea which it is evident the apoſtles themſelves did not give up without the greateſt reluctance, was ſufficiently extravagant, without looking any farther; and yet Jeſus himſelf, a working carpenter, as no doubt he was, muſt have originally formed theſe great ideas.

That Jeſus was not a man of much acquired knowledge is certain, and that he had any extraordinary ſhare of natural ſagacity, or ability, does not appear. In curing diſeaſes he did not pretend to underſtand more of the nature and cauſes of them than any other perſon. This applies to the caſe of demoniacs, as well as any other. And his language ſhews that he was under the ſame miſtake with reſpect to this diſeaſe as the reſt of his country-

men, ſuppoſing inſane perſons to be really poſſeſſed by dæmons.

That ſuch men as the apoſtles, on ſeeing a man work miracles, and eſpecially a man of exemplary piety and goodneſs, as Jeſus was, and then entertain an idea that he was the Meſſiah their nation expected, and that, on being called upon to attend him conſtantly, they ſhould imagine that ſome great thing was intended for them in his kingdom, and be induced to leave their low occupations with a view to ſuch advancement, is perfectly natural. No man is wholly without the deſire of bettering his condition, when he has a fair and reaſonable proſpect of doing it; and here piety and ambition would unite to make them become the followers of Jeſus.

But that ſuch plain men as theſe ſhould enter into a league with a man no way ſuperior to themſelves, that they ſhould either be deceived by him, or join with him in a ſcheme to deceive the world, and with the poor chance of ſucceeding in this abandon the employments by which they had long ſubſiſted, and for perſons in their

condition

condition reputably, to the age of about forty; that they ſhould agree to make him their head, and implicitly act by his orders; that when he was cut off by an ignominious death, they ſhould pretend that he roſe from the dead, and even ſtill continue to act as by his inſtructions, and perſiſt in this ſcheme without any conſciouſneſs of ſuperior powers, and without any reſource but in their own artifices, through the whole of a painful life, and many of them die in torment, without the reſt being at all diſcouraged, and without confeſſing the impoſture, exceeds any thing that we read of inſanity in the hiſtory of mankind. And that ſuch men as theſe ſhould eventually ſucceed in their wild ſcheme, is altogether incredible. When we ſee not only undertaken, but actually carried into execution, things evidently above the power of the viſible agents, it is natural, and philoſophical, to attribute the effect to inviſible agents. If the powers of *man* be unequal to the effect, we muſt have recourſe to powers *ſuperhuman*. For every effect muſt have an adequate cauſe.

In fact, that ſuch men as Jeſus and the apoſtles ſhould either form ſuch a ſcheme as that of the *regeneration of the world* (for Chriſtianity pretends to nothing leſs) when it required ages to effect it, and ſhould finally ſucceed in it, notwithſtanding all the obſtacles that lay in their way, is ſomething more extraordinary, more out of the courſe of nature, and therefore more properly miraculous, than any thing recorded in the goſpels, and conſequently leſs credible.

If we conſider the firſt diſciples of Jeſus as *writers*, their conduct will appear as unaccountable as when they are conſidered as engaged in a ſcheme by which they could have ſo little proſpect of impoſing upon the world, and with a certainty, as they would ſoon find, of meeting with every kind of ill uſage, and frequently dying a violent death.

They were not men of education, and probably had read nothing beſides the ſacred books of the Jews. Conſequently, if they be ſuppoſed to have been perſons who formed to themſelves the idea of the cha-

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racter and hiſtory of Jeſus as a prophet, they would, no doubt, have made it to reſemble that of their antient prophets, for they had no other models to follow; and if they had meant to recommend their work to Jews, no other would have appeared likely to anſwer their purpoſe. Now, all the antient prophets bore a great reſemblance to each other, and John the Baptiſt very much reſembled them, in that auſterity which was common to them all; and this circumſtance, no doubt, contributed to his good reception among his countrymen.

But the character of Jeſus was a great original, exceedingly different from that of any former prophet. His general manners were pleaſing, he eaſily mixed with the world, and occaſionally partook of its enjoyments. This ſo much offended his countrymen, that they reproached him with it. Was this, then, a circumſtance that an inventor would have adopted with a view to recommend the character to *Jews?*

Jeſus's manner of diſcourſing and working miracles were in many reſpects new.

Parables

Parables are not frequent in the old Teſtament; but they conſtitute a great part of the diſcourſes of Jeſus. Preceding prophets worked miracles but rarely, on particular occaſions, and often with great preparation. But they occur ſo frequently in the hiſtory of Jeſus, though a hiſtory of little more than a year, that, with reſpect to number, they were probably equal to all that had been performed before from the beginning of the world. His manner alſo of working miracles was peculiar to himſelf. It ſeemed as if they were acts fully within his own power, though it ſufficiently appears, both by his declarations, and his manner occaſionally, that the power by which they were performed was not his own.

In other reſpects alſo the character and manner of Jeſus were ſo different from thoſe of any of the preceding Jewiſh prophets, that they who were not writers by profeſſion, and had no other models to follow, cannot be ſuppoſed to have thought of it. Had their view been to impoſe on the Jews a *Meſſiah*, and not merely a prophet,

phet; they were ſtill more unfortunate. For certainly no Jew ever formed ſuch an idea of their Meſſiah as the evangeliſts have exhibited.

But it is evident from the bare peruſal of the goſpels, that the evangeliſts were no inventors, or capable of being ſo. They merely relate what they had ſeen and heard, and this they do without the leaſt ornament, or oſtentation; contenting themſelves with relating facts, and leaving it to others to draw concluſions, and characters from them. No other books bear ſo many unequivocal marks of being genuine narratives of facts, or carry ſo much of their own evidence along with them.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE X.

Of the Miracles of the Apoſtles.

And fear came upon every ſoul, and many wonders and ſigns were done by the Apoſtles.

Acts ii. 43.

We have ſeen how the age of miracles, which ceaſed at the Babyloniſh captivity, was, after an interruption of ſix hundred years (in which we find no pretenſion to any ſuch thing) revived by Jeſus, in circumſtances in which it was abſolutely impoſſible for him, or for any man, to have impoſed upon thoſe before whom they were exhibited.

We have ſeen how a man of no higher rank than a common carpenter, with fiſhermen, and other perſons of no greater eſtimation, for his companions, with the

jealouſy and hatred of all perſons in power, or eminent for knowledge, to contend with, went about publicly curing all ſick perſons, under whatever diſeaſe they laboured, even inſanity, whenever they preſented themſelves; raiſing ſeveral perſons from the dead, and performing various other miracles, of the moſt aſtoniſhing kind; ſuch as twice feeding a great multitude with a ſmall quantity of proviſions, ſtilling a tempeſt, and walking on the ſea. His divine miſſion was alſo atteſted by voices from heaven, but more eſpecially by his reſurrection from the dead, after a public crucifixion, and in ſuch other circumſtances with reſpect to its credibility, that it does not ſeem poſſible to imagine any others which could have ſo effectually enſured the belief of it in diſtant ages.

So important, however, in the eye of Providence, was the credibility of the goſpel hiſtory, in all future ages, that the ſcene of miracles was not cloſed with the reſurrection and aſcenſion of Jeſus. The ſame ſpirit, or power, by which Jeſus worked miracles

miracles was transferred to the apoſtles, and other diſciples of Jeſus, and continued with them, as far as appears, through life, though it probably terminated with that generation. This *effuſion of the ſpirit*, as it may be called, was promiſed by Jeſus to his apoſtles, when he aſſured them, John xiv. 12, that after he ſhould leave them they ſhould do even greater things than he had done; and before his aſcenſion he directed them to wait in Jeruſalem till they ſhould be endued with power from on high. This promiſe began to be fulfilled on the following Pentecoſt, about ten days after his aſcenſion.

On the death of Jeſus all his diſciples were, as might have been expected, from their having no idea of any ſuch event, thrown into the greateſt conſternation, and diſperſed. Believing him to be the Meſſiah, they had flattered themſelves that he would, at a proper time, aſſume what they took to be the proper character of that high office, and appear as a king. But on his death all their hopes were blaſted, nor can it be imagined, on any principles conſiſtent

ſiſtent with our knowledge of human nature, that they would ever have appeared in public, avowing themſelves to be his diſciples, and acting as by authority from him, and continue to do ſo through life, in the face of danger and of death, unleſs they had been fully perſuaded of the truth of his reſurrection, and had actually received the powers that had been promiſed them; and with reſpect to neither of them could they have been deceived themſelves. But with this ſuppoſition, their conduct, and all the following hiſtory of the planting of Chriſtianity, is perfectly conſiſtent. For they acted as men naturally would do in thoſe new and peculiar circumſtances.

As the hiſtory of this period is of infinite importance, it behoves us to give the cloſeſt attention to it. Though we are not in the ſituation of the firſt diſciples of Jeſus, expoſed to perſecution and death for our faith in his miſſion, it behoves us, as men pretending to reaſon, and eſpecially with reſpect to religion (on which ſo much of our preſent enjoyment, as well as our

future proſpects, depends) not to be impoſed upon by fables inſtead of true hiſtory, by tricks of legerdemain inſtead of real miracles, and by the artifices of man inſtead of the power of God. I ſhall, therefore, bring into review the particulars of the great ſcene that opened on the world after the death and ſuppoſed reſurrection of Jeſus, that we may ſee whether the facts correſpond with the ſuppoſition of the reality of that reſurrection, or not; taking it for granted that human nature was the ſame then that it is now, and that both they who preached Chriſtianity, and they to whom it was preached, were *men*, as we are.

Had the apoſtles been men who knew that Jeſus had been a mere impoſtor, and had choſen (for any reaſon that we cannot well imagine) to carry on the ſame impoſture and act in his name, rather than in their own; and had they been acquainted with his arts, it is moſt probable that they would, at leaſt have begun with attempting ſomething of the ſame kind. But the firſt extraordinary narrative in their hiſtory

is of ſomething quite unlike any thing that we find in the hiſtory of Jeſus, and what nothing they had ſeen of him, or, could have learned of him, could have led them to conceive; and yet, had it been an impoſition, it was the boldeſt that ever was thought of by the moſt practiſed cheats, and, in their circumſtances, the moſt unlikely to ſucceed.

The apoſtles, and other diſciples of Jeſus, were well known to be men in the loweſt ranks of life, wholly unlearned, and acquainted with no language beſides their own. Of this there never was a queſtion; and yet when they were aſſembled together on the day of Pentecoſt, after *a ſound* as *from heaven*, a *ruſhing mighty wind*, and the appearance of *flames of fire* on the heads of all the company, circumſtances which it was impoſſible for them to have produced by art, they all began to ſpeak diſtinctly and intelligibly in various languages, many of which had no affinity to each other; and yet they were perfectly underſtood by the natives of all thoſe countries who were preſent. The amazement

of theſe perſons, who had reſorted to Jeruſalem from the moſt diſtant parts of the world, is expreſſed in the moſt natural manner. Acts ii. 5, *There were dwelling at Jeruſalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noiſed abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded; becauſe every man heard them ſpeak in his own language. And they were all amazed, and marvelled, ſaying one to another, Behold are not all theſe that ſpeak Galileans? and how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born, Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Meſopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Aſia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and ſtrangers of Rome, Jews and Proſelytes, Cretes and Arabians; we do hear them ſpeak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, ſaying one to another, What meaneth this?*

Now I do not think it is poſſible to imagine any fact more deciſively miraculous than

than this. Had it been only one foreign language that theſe men had undertaken to ſpeak ſo ſuddenly, it might have been poſſible that, having prepared themſelves beforehand, and aſſiſted one another, they might, in ſome meaſure, have ſucceeded. But the ſcale on which this miracle was performed was much too great for the purpoſe of impoſture. For by one or other of the company every known language was ſpoken, and perſons to whom the languages were native were the judges of their ſpeaking them correctly, and by no means prediſpoſed to make a report in favour of the ſpeakers.

The effect correſponded to this wonderful event. Had there been any trick in it, it would ſoon have been expoſed. But ſome, who underſtood not the languages, ſaying that thoſe who ſpake them were drunk, Peter addreſſed them in ſo forcible a manner on the ſubject of the death and reſurrection of Jeſus, of which all the company preſent declared themſelves witneſſes, that three thouſand perſons immediately avowed themſelves

converts, and were baptized. The manner in which Peter ſpake concerning Jeſus, and his miracles, the particulars of which he had no occaſion to enumerate, or to bring any proof of, as being well known to all preſent, is remakable, and ſuch as no impoſtor would have ventured upon. Acts ii. 22, *Ye men of Iſrael, hear theſe words, Jeſus of Nazareth, a man approved of God, among you, by miracles, and wonders, and ſigns, which God did by him, in the midſt of you, as ye yourſelves alſo know; him, being delivered by the determinate counſel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and ſlain. This Jeſus hath God raiſed up, whereof we all are witneſſes.*

Was it poſſible to have made ſo many converts, if either the fact of ſpeaking with unknown tongues, or the miracles of Jeſus, ſo confidently appealed to, could have been diſputed? And the effect of this addreſs upon the people in general, who did not chuſe to be baptized, and thus publicly join themſelves to the ſociety of Chriſtians, correſponded to the truth of

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it. Ver. 43, *Fear came upon every ſoul.* As to the faith of the profeſſed diſciples, who were greatly increaſed, it appeared by its fruits to be of the firmeſt kind. Ver. 41, *Then they that gladly received the word were baptized, and the ſame day there were added unto them about three thouſand ſouls. And they continued ſtedfaſtly in the apoſtles doctrine and fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And they that believed were together, and had all things common, and ſold their poſſeſſions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every one had need. And they continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from houſe to houſe, did eat their meat with gladneſs and ſingleneſs of heart, praiſing God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily ſuch as ſhould be ſaved.*

Such was the great and ſingular miracle by which the truth of Chriſtianity was firſt atteſted, after the aſcenſion of Jeſus; and this ſpecies of miracle was not confined to this memorable day, but continued to be a ſtanding miracle in the Chriſtian church,

probably during the life-time of the apoſtles; ſo that there was ſufficient opportunity of examining the reality of it. It was, by way of eminence, denominated *the gift of the ſpirit*, and was always conferred on the diſciples by the laying on of the hands of the apoſtles; being the only miracle that may be ſaid to have been, in a manner, in their own power. The apoſtle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, ſpeaks of it as well known to, and ſeemingly experienced by, moſt of them; as exerciſed in his abſence, and a great cauſe of oſtentation with many of them. Writing to the Galatians, Ch. iii. 2, he appeals to this gift of the ſpirit as given to them in conſequence of the preaching of the goſpel, and not any thing that they derived from their obſervance of the law of Moſes. And yet, both in the Corinthian Church, and among the Galatians, there were many who undervalued this apoſtle, and who were deſirous to ſet up themſelves and others above him. Would he then have dared to appeal, in his vindication, to a fact

that

that was known to have no foundation? It is what no man in his ſenſes would have done.

The hiſtory of the promulgation of Chriſtianity by the apoſtles does not appear to be ſo crowded with miracles as that of Jeſus, if we except the above-mentioned ſtanding miracle of the gift of tongues, which ſeems to have been imparted to almoſt all the converts. But the public miniſtry of Jeſus was of a ſhort duration, and that of the apoſtles was of many years continuance. It is probable, alſo, that, as was the caſe with reſpect to Jeſus, only the more remarkable of the caſes are recorded. But theſe deſerve particular attention, being ſuch as no impoſtors would have ventured upon, eſpecially the firſt, Ch. iii. 2, which was the inſtantaneous and perfect cure of a man who had been lame from his birth, and who was then forty years old. It is probable, alſo, that he had been the greateſt part of his life accuſtomed to beg at the gate of the temple, ſo that no caſe of real and incurable

curable lameneſs could well have been better known.

When this man aſked alms of Peter and John, as he did of others, when they were about to go into the temple, Peter, no doubt feeling a divine impulſe, ſaid to him, Acts iii. 6, *Silver and gold have I none, but ſuch as I have give I thee. In the name of Jeſus Chriſt of Nazareth, riſe up and walk, and taking him by the hand, he inſtantly leaped up, ſtood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, leaping, and walking, and praiſing God.* And this in the preſence of a great crowd of people.

Such an event as this naturally brought together a great concourſe of people; and Peter took the opportunity of addreſſing them, as before, on the ſubject of the death of Jeſus and his reſurrection, of which he again declared himſelf and his aſſociates to be witneſſes; and ſaid that it was not by any virtue or power of their own, but by faith in him, that this miracle had been performed. He farther aſſured them that, though Jeſus was aſcended into heaven, he would

return

return at the time of the reſtitution of all things, ſpoken of by the prophets.

This miracle, followed by this proper addreſs, produced a great addition to the number of profeſſed diſciples, who now amounted to five thouſand men. What put the reality of the miracle paſt all diſpute, was the behaviour of the great council of the nation upon this occaſion. For Peter and John being called to appear before them, for preaching in ſo public a manner, they boldly declared, that the miracle was performed in the name of Jeſus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, but whom God had raiſed from the dead; and the man who had been lame being preſent, they had nothing to reply. They therefore contented themſelves with threatening them, and charging them not to preach any more in the name of Jeſus. But Peter and John openly refuſed to obey ſuch an order, declaring that they would obey God rather than man. The embarraſſment, and the whole conduct of theſe magiſtrates can only be accounted for by ſuppoſing the truth of the fact.

fact. The ſtory is alſo told with the greateſt ſimplicity. Acts iv. 13. *Now when they ſaw the boldneſs of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled, and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jeſus. And beholding the man who was healed ſtanding with them, they could ſay nothing againſt it. But when they had commanded them to go aſide, out of the council, they conferred among themſelves; ſaying, What ſhall we do to theſe men; for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifeſt to all them that dwell in Jeruſalem, and we cannot deny it. But that it ſpread no farther among the people, let us ſtraitly threaten them, that they ſpeak henceforth no more in this name. And they called them, and commanded them not to ſpeak at all, nor preach, in the name of Jeſus. But Peter and John anſwered and ſaid unto them, Whether it be right in the ſight of God, to hearken unto you, rather than unto God, judge ye; for we cannot but ſpeak the things which we have ſeen and heard. So when they had farther threatened them, they let them go,*

finding

finding nothing how they might puniſh them, becauſe of the people; for all men glorified God for that which was done. For the man was above forty years old on whom this miracle of healing was ſhewed. This public miracle was more than any other in proof of the divine miſſion and reſurrection of Jeſus, and nothing could have been more unexceptionable and deciſive.

The preſence of God with the apoſtles was awfully witneſſed in the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, who would have impoſed upon them with reſpect to the price of a poſſeſſion which they had ſold, and pretended to have wholly given to the common ſtock of the church. Upon this it is ſaid, Acts v. 12, *By the hands of the apoſtles were many ſigns and wonders wrought among the people, inſomuch that they brought forth the ſick into the ſtreets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at leaſt the ſhadow of Peter paſſing by might overſhadow ſome of them. There came alſo a multitude out of the cities round about Jeruſalem, bringing ſick folks, and them that were vexed with unclean ſpirits, and they were healed every one.*

Upon

Upon this the high-prieſt, and the rulers of the nation, were, as might have been expected, more exaſperated than ever; and ſtill hoping to ſubdue them by terror, they put them in priſon, Acts v. 18; but in the night they were miraculouſly ſet at liberty; and when they were ſent for to appear before the council, the judges were informed that they were teaching in the temple. And the officers who had been ſent to conduct them into the court ſaid, Ver. 23, *The priſon truly found we ſhut with all ſafety, but when we had opened we found no man within. And preſently other perſons came, and ſaid, Behold the men whom ye put in priſon are ſtanding in the temple, and teaching the people.*

The magiſtrates being utterly confounded at this, and not knowing what farther to do, contented themſelves with threatening them as before, and charging them not to preach any more to the people. But Peter and the other apoſtles, having theſe evident tokens of the preſence of God with them, anſwered as before, and ſaid, Ver. 29, *We ought to obey God rather than man.*

They

They alſo boldly repeated their teſtimony to the divine miſſion and reſurrection of Jeſus.

After this theſe magiſtrates thought to put the apoſtles to death, as they had done Jeſus; but, in conſequence of the prudent advice of Gamaliel, one of their body, they only ordered them to be beaten, and again charged them to preach no more in the name of Jeſus. This, however, was far from having the intended effect. For we read, Ver. 41, that *they departed from the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to ſuffer ſhame for the name of Chriſt. And daily in the temple, and in every houſe, they ceaſed not to teach and to preach Jeſus Chriſt.* What do we ſee in this conduct, both of the apoſtles, and of the rulers of the nation, but the cleareſt evidence of the truth of the apoſtles doctrine, and the impotence of civil power to prevent the effect of it?

I intend not to dwell on other miracles, as the cure of Æneas, and the raiſing from death of Tabitha by Peter, his ſecond miraculous deliverance from priſon, where he

was confined by Herod; or many that occur in the hiſtory of Paul, as, though all tending, in a general way, to ſhew the preſence of a divine power with the apoſtles, they had only local effects. But the circumſtances attending the converſion of Paul himſelf are deſerving of very particular notice.

It has often been ſaid by unbelievers, that the truth of the facts on which Chriſtianity is founded is not atteſted by unbelieving Jews or Heathens. But it has appeared that the facts were not denied by the moſt inveterate enemies of Chriſtianity in this early age, not even by the Jewiſh rulers, who perſecuted the apoſtles, and would have put them to death. Beſides, an enemy converted by being convinced of the truth of the facts, and aſcribing them to their proper cauſe, becomes of courſe a Chriſtian, and a friend. And the ſtrongeſt atteſtation that can be given is that of one who, from having been a violent enemy, becomes a friend by this fair means; and ſuch was the caſe of Paul.

Had the Jewiſh rulers, and other the moſt

moſt inveterate enemies of Chriſtianity, been aſſembled, and have put their conviction of the truth of it upon the converſion of any one man whatever, of their own body, and acting by their direction, it would probably have been Paul, who was a moſt bigoted Jew, a Phariſee, and a moſt open enemy of the Chriſtian name. It was probably he who procured the death of Stephen, as he is ſaid to have *conſented to his death*, and to have *kept the clothes of them that ſtoned him.* It is farther ſaid of him, Acts viii. 3, that *he made havoc of the church, entering into every houſe, and haling men and women committed them to priſon; ſo that the diſciples were ſcattered abroad, and went to preach in diſtant places.* But even thus they did not eſcape his purſuit. We read, Ch. ix. 1, that *breathing out threatening and ſlaughter againſt the diſciples, he*, of his own accord, *went unto the high-prieſt, and deſired of him letters to Damaſcus, to the ſynagogue; that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jeruſalem.*

The converſion, therefore, of ſuch a man as this, was the greateſt and the cleareſt triumph that the Chriſtian cauſe could have. His paſſions, and no doubt his intereſt too, impelled him to perſiſt in his violence. And having, no doubt, heard all that had been alleged by the apoſtles, and other Chriſtians, it was not eaſy to ſay what could give his mind a different impreſſion. And yet this was effected, and though ſuddenly, ſo effectually, that he ever after promoted the cauſe of Chriſtianity with as much zeal as ever he had perſecuted it. Nay, he bore every kind of perſecution himſelf about thirty years, and at length died a martyr to his new principles. His motive to this could not have been either intereſt or reputation. For the Chriſtians had nothing to bribe him with, and the Chriſtian cauſe at that time was in no degree of eſtimation with any perſon whoſe good opinion he would naturally wiſh to engage. On the contrary, Chriſtianity was from the firſt, and long after, *a ſect every where ſpoken againſt.* Nothing, therefore, remained to make any impreſſion

impreſſion upon his mind, but ſome miracle; and ſuch he ſays, in his repeated account of his converſion, was the true cauſe of it.

As he was going to Damaſcus, in company with others, who, no doubt, went in order to aſſiſt him, and forward his ſcheme of perſecuting the Chriſtians whom he ſhould find in that city, he was ſuddenly ſtruck to the ground, and rendered blind, by a light from heaven, and immediately afterwards addreſſed by Jeſus himſelf, who bade him proceed to Damaſcus, and ſaid that he would there be informed what he ſhould do.

This was not a viſion, in the night, or any thing that paſſed when he was alone, and therefore ſubject to illuſion, but in mid-day, and in the company of his friends; and neither himſelf nor they appear to have had any miſtruſt or miſgiving about the buſineſs they went upon. His companions alſo heard the ſound of the voice, but did not diſtinguiſh the articulation.

In this ſtate of blindneſs Paul continued three days, and then a Chriſtian, named Ananias, was directed by Jeſus to go to him, being aſſured that he had had a viſion in which he (i. e. Ananias) came, and putting his hands upon him, cauſed him to receive his ſight. After ſome objection on the part of Ananias, on account of the well known principles and conduct of Paul, he went to him; when his ſight was reſtored, and he was baptized. As ſoon as he was recovered he began to preach in the name of Chriſt, made many converts, and devoted his whole life to it. And in this he was remarkably ſucceſsful.

After this great miracle, of the converſion of Paul himſelf, the miracles performed by him are comparatively of little moment, as the ſtriking of Elymas blind in the preſence of the governor of Cyprus, in conſequence of which the governor was converted; his healing a cripple at the gate of Lyſtra, which led the people of that place to imagine that he was one of the gods in the form of man; his caſting out a ſpirit of divination from a woman at Philippi;

Philippi; his many miracles, and eſpecially caſting out demons, at Epheſus; his raiſing Eutychus to life, and his curing the father of Publius the governor of Malta, and others in that iſland; and himſelf receiving no harm from the bite of a viper in that place.

The credibility of theſe miracles depends in part upon the teſtimony of the relater, who appears in many of them to have been an eye witneſs, but principally upon the indiſputable effects of Paul's preaching, as he founded ſeveral Chriſtian churches in the places in which the miracles are ſaid to have been performed; which could not have been the caſe if the facts had not been true; the account of theſe tranſactions being publiſhed, and read in all Chriſtian churches, while the events were recent; the continuance and flouriſhing ſtate of theſe churches, and their conſtant uſe of this book, as well as others of the New Teſtament, are ſufficient vouchers for their truth.

That there was ſomething very extraordinary in the miracles of the apoſtles, and

ſuperior to any arts, or tricks, that were known to thoſe who were the moſt practiſed in thoſe things at that time, appears from the converſion, or pretended converſion, of Simon of Samaria, commonly called Simon Magus. This Simon is ſaid, Acts viii. 9, to have been a perſon *who before time uſed ſorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that he himſelf was ſome great one; to whom they all gave heed, from the leaſt to the greateſt, ſaying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, becauſe that of a long time he had bewitched them with his ſorceries.* Yet this Simon *wondered, beholding the miracles that were done by Philip*, declared himſelf a Chriſtian, and was baptized. And ſeeing that the Holy Spirit, or the gift of ſpeaking in unknown tongues, was conferred by the laying on of the hands of Peter, he offered him money to obtain the ſame power; thinking that it was the neceſſary conſequence of ſome particular ſecret, with which he was not acquainted, and which he had no means of diſcovering. But Peter, with juſt indignation, replied, *Thy*

money

money periſh with thee, becauſe thou haſt thought that the gift of God may be purchaſed with money.

The extraordinary nature of the miracles wrought by Paul was equally evident from the conduct of ſome Jews, who pretended to exorciſm at Epheſus. Seeing demons caſt out by Paul in the name of Jeſus, they thought to do the ſame by merely uſing the ſame words; ſaying to a demoniac, Acts xix. 13, *We adjure thee by Jeſus whom Paul preaches.* But though they could uſe the words, they ſoon found that they were not accompanied with the ſame power. For the demoniac anſwered, Ver. 15, *Jeſus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil ſpirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed againſt them, ſo that they fled out of that houſe, naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews, and Greeks alſo, dwelling at Epheſus. And fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jeſus was magnified.* Could there have been a clearer confeſſion, and from enemies, who themſelves pretended to ex-

traordinary arts, that what was done by the apoſtles exceeded any powers that they were acquainted with. And yet the apoſtles had had no education, or inſtruction, that could have given them this ſuperiority. This too was the confeſſion of the Egyptian magicians, that the miracles of Moſes were performed *by the finger of God*, whereas what *they* did was ſomething of a different kind.

The hiſtory of the converſion of Cornelius, the firſt Gentile Chriſtian, is particularly worthy of attention, eſpecially with reſpect to the correſpondence between the viſions of Cornelius and of Peter, the one at Cæſarea, and the other at Joppa. But as it does not immediately relate to the evidence of Chriſtianity in general, ſo much as to the circumſtance of extending the benefits of it to the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, I do not enlarge upon it. But the manner in which Peter addreſſed Cornelius, and his friends on that occaſion, is much to my purpoſe, as it ſhews the notoriety of the great facts on which the truth of Chriſtianity is founded. Acts x. 36, *The*

word

word which God ſent unto the children of Iſrael, preaching peace by Jeſus Chriſt; that word ye know, which was publiſhed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptiſm which John preached. He had no occaſion to direct them to any evidence with which they were not acquainted. He took it for granted that no perſon could be ignorant of the facts, or require any proof of them. Paul alſo ſuppoſed the ſame in his addreſs to Agrippa. Acts xxvi. 26, *For the king knoweth of thoſe things, before whom alſo I ſpeak freely. For I am perſuaded that none of theſe things are hidden from him. For this thing was not done in a corner.*

It pleaſed God that this exhibition of miracles ſhould be confined to the age of the apoſtles, and be inſtrumental in the planting of Chriſtianity. For this important purpoſe they were neceſſary. Otherwiſe the teſtimony of the apoſtles, and others, to the reſurrection of Jeſus, might not have been ſufficient to inſure the credibility of ſo very extraordinary a thing to future ages. But the evidence of the numerous

merous miracles performed by the apoſtles, added to thoſe performed by Chriſt, certified by common human teſtimony, is abundantly ſufficient for the purpoſe. For what can any reaſonable man, who muſt be ſenſible of the inconvenience of the courſe of nature being perpetually violated (as it muſt be if every man ſhould be gratified with the ſight of miracles) require farther, than that a ſufficient number of perſons, conſtituted of courſe as they themſelves are, ſhould have had every motive to inquire into the truth of the facts, and have been fully ſatisfied with reſpect to them. For then he could not but be convinced, that if he himſelf had been in their ſituation, he would have been ſatisfied as well as they. Nay the conviction that ſuch a number of perſons, in the circumſtances of the apoſtles and other primitive Chriſtians, that real miracles were performed, in atteſtation of the facts in the goſpel hiſtory, is even more ſatisfactory than any that could have been exhibited to himſelf; becauſe he might ſay, that his ſenſes, or his ignorance, might be impoſed upon, through ſome affection peculiar

peculiar to himſelf; but that ſo many thouſand perſons, as good judges as himſelf, and as much intereſted in the diſcovery of the truth as he could have been, could not have been impoſed upon, without a much greater miracle than any of thoſe to which they gave their aſſent.

On this firm baſis, my Chriſtian brethren, ſtands our faith; and ſurely it ſtands upon a rock. It only requires an unbiaſſed mind, and eſpecially a freedom from thoſe vicious diſpoſitions and purſuits which chiefly indiſpoſe men to the duties enjoined by the goſpel, to perceive its evidence, and embrace it with joy.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XI.

On the Reſurrection of Jeſus.

But now is Chriſt riſen from the dead, and become the firſt fruits of them that ſlept.

1 COR. XV. 20.

WE cannot imagine any queſtion more intereſting to man, than whether he ſhall ſurvive the grave, ſo that he ſhall live, and eſpecially live for ever, after he has been dead. Every queſtion relating to our condition *here* is of no moment at all when compared to *this*.

Nothing that we ſee in nature can lead us to form any ſuch expectation. I ſay *expectation*. For though ſome appearances may lead us to indulge a *wiſh*, and in ſome perſons perhaps encourage a *hope*, of another life after this, yet if we were left to the mere light of nature, it would remain improbable upon the whole; ſo that we could

could not, in this ſituation, die with any reaſonable proſpect of living again.

The conſtitution of man very much reſembles that of other animals. They have the ſame ſenſes of body, and the ſame faculties of mind, differing from us only in *degree*; man being more intelligent than they, and therefore capable of greater refinement in his paſſions and affections, and having greater comprehenſion of mind, ſo as to take into his view more of the paſt, and of the future, together with the preſent, than they can. This, however, amounts to no difference in *kind*; and the difference that we ſee among other animals in theſe reſpects, is as great as that which ſubſiſts between us and the higheſt of them; the oyſter, for example, and the elephant. Conſequently, it would be natural to conclude that one fate awaits us all, the ſuperior kinds of animals as well as the inferior, and man as well as them all. When we die, we are equally ſubject to corruption, and a total diſſolution of the parts of which we conſiſt, without any appearance of their ever being re-aſſembled, and re-arranged as they

they were before, or of any other Being, in a new form, reſulting from them. Death is a great veil, which no man can draw aſide, and beyond which all is darkneſs.

But were it poſſible, by the force of any reaſoning, to diſcover the *probability* of a future ſtate (and few perſons will pretend that they can, by the light of nature, arrive at *certainty* with reſpect to it) the reaſons, whatever they were, that made ſo great an event probable to one, might give no ſatisfaction to another.

Beſides, the magnitude of the queſtion is ſuch, and the intereſt we have in the ſolution of it is ſo great, that nothing but the ſtrongeſt and cleareſt evidence could give general ſatisfaction with reſpect to it. Nothing leſs than a poſitive aſſurance from our Maker himſelf could anſwer this purpoſe. And this (which if any thing could be ſaid to require it, did ſo) revelation informs us has been given, and in ſuch a manner as muſt give entire ſatisfaction to every unprejudiced mind, *life and immortality being fully brought to light by the goſpel*, as I hope to evince in the proſecution of this diſcourſe.

It

It could not be expected that the Divine Being ſhould give this aſſurance to every individual of the human race. It would be ſufficient if it was given to ſome, to be communicated, with proper evidence of the fact, to others; and unleſs the communication was made to every perſon, this is all that could be done in the caſe. For this truth is of ſuch a nature as to be incapable of ſtrict, or mathematical, demonſtration, ſuch as that of *twice two* making *four*, but only of ſuch proof as *hiſtorical facts* are capable of. But the evidence of a future ſtate ſhould not be undervalued on that account; becauſe there are no kinds of truth of which we have a more firm perſuaſion than of thoſe of the hiſtorical kind; as for example, that ſuch a perſon as Julius Cæſar once lived at Rome, and that there exiſts at preſent ſuch a city as Conſtantinople. What propoſitions do we believe more firmly than we do theſe? Now if our faith in a future life can be ſhewn to be as well founded as theſe are, it is quite ſufficient for the purpoſe; becauſe it will be a faith that men will not ſcruple to *act* upon. They would then live

as expectants of immortality, and would do nothing that ſhould imply a doubt of a future ſtate. That is, they would lead virtuous lives, which is the end of all religion.

In what manner God was pleaſed to impart to mankind the firſt information concerning a future life we are not now acquainted, as we have no account of it in the writings of Moſes, or in any other writings now extant. But we ſee the *effect* of it in the Jews, who to this day are all firm believers in it; and, with a few exceptions, appear always to have believed in it. We may, therefore, preſume that, in ſome period of time paſt, mankind, or at leaſt the anceſtors of that nation, had ſatisfactory evidence of the Divine Being having given them this aſſurance. Becauſe it is an idea that we cannot well ſuppoſe would ever have occurred to men themſelves.

That there may be ſomething in man that continues to exiſt, notwithſtanding the change that takes place in him at death, *may* be imagined. But, upon that principle, man could not properly be ſaid to *die* at all.

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He only continues to exiſt in ſome other form or manner. But that man ſhould really *die*, and after continuing in a ſtate of death, come to life again at a future period, that is, that there ſhould be a proper *reſurrection of the dead*, which is the faith of the Jews and Chriſtians (being, I muſt now preſume, the clear doctrine of both the Old and the New Teſtament) I will venture to ſay muſt ever have appeared in the higheſt degree improbable, and therefore incredible. Nothing but the expreſs aſſurance of the great Being who made men could have ſatisfied them that he would revive them in thoſe circumſtances.

The original record of the communication of this moſt important truth having been loſt, it pleaſed the Divine Being to renew it by Jeſus Chriſt, the founder of our religion; who not only aſſerted the doctrine, as from God, and confirmed it by miracles, or ſuch works as no man could have done if God had not been with him; but who himſelf actually died and roſe again, as a proof of the reality of the thing. And this ſeems to have been all the evi-

dence that mankind could have aſked, if the moſt intelligent, and the moſt incredulous of them, had been required to ſay what would ſatisfy them.

As Jeſus reſted the evidence of his divine miſſion, and conſequently his authority to preach the doctrine of a future life, in a more particular manner upon his own reſurrection from the dead; and as, in all caſes, examples have the greateſt weight with mankind, I ſhall confine myſelf at this time to the conſideration of the circumſtances of his death and reſurrection, ſhewing them to have been ſuch as render thoſe important events in the higheſt degree credible, both at the time when they took place; and, which is of much more conſequence, in all future time. So that, had mankind, not only in that period, but in the moſt diſtant ages, been required to name the evidence that would give them the moſt ſatisfaction, it will appear that it has been given them; and that, in any other circumſtances than the actual ones, the events would have appeared leſs credible than they do at preſent.

I ſhall

I ſhall firſt conſider the circumſtances which tend to give peculiar ſtrength to the evidence of the reſurrection of Jeſus, and then reply to ſome objections which have been made to it. After this I ſhall ſhew that this hiſtorical evidence of the truth of *revealed religion* proves the truth of *natural religion*, and conclude with a practical application of the doctrine.

In the firſt place I ſhall conſider the circumſtances which give peculiar ſtrength to the evidence of the reſurrection of Jeſus.

1. His death was not private, among his friends, but in public, and accompliſhed by his enemies, who, we may be ſure, would not leave their own great purpoſe unfiniſhed, when it was in their power completely to effect it. This we cannot doubt to have been the principal reaſon, in the plan of divine providence, why Jeſus was executed as a criminal, in conſequence of the ſentence of a public court of juſtice. After this, no reaſonable doubt could be entertained of the reality of his death. Accordingly, it does not appear that any doubt was entertained of it at the time, by thoſe

who were the beſt judges, and who were, at the ſame time, the moſt intereſted to diſpute the fact. And this is all that we can reaſonably require at this day.

It is true that Jeſus expired ſooner than other perſons uſually did in the ſame circumſtances. But this might be owing to his having a more delicate conſtitution, and eſpecially to his having been ſo much exhauſted by his ſevere agony in the garden the preceding night; an agony which affected him ſo much that it would not have been extraordinary if he had actually died in conſequence of it: ſince ſuch conſternation and terror as he appears to have been in is well known to have been, of itſelf, the cauſe of death to many perſons.

The death of Jeſus was ſo evident to the ſoldiers who attended the execution, and who, no doubt (being uſed to the buſineſs) were ſufficient judges of the ſigns of death, that, concluding him to be actually dead, they did not break his bones, as they did thoſe of the other perſons who were executed along with him. One of them, however, did what was fully equivalent to

it; for he thruſt a ſpear into his ſide, ſo that blood and water evidently flowed out of the wound. Now though we may be at a loſs to account for the *water*, it was certainly impoſſible ſo to pierce the body as that *blood* ſhould viſibly, and inſtantly, flow from the wound, without piercing either the heart itſelf, or ſome large blood veſſel, the rupture of which would have been mortal.

After this, Jeſus was taken down from the croſs, was ſwathed in ſpices, as the bodies of perſons of diſtinction among the Jews uſually were, was left in that ſtate, without any appearance of life, and depoſited in a cold ſepulchre, where he could have no aſſiſtance to bring him to life if any remains of life had been in him. Can we then have any doubt of Jeſus having been unqueſtionably dead, when both friends and enemies had no doubt at the time on the ſubject?

2. The circumſtances of the re-appearing of Jeſus after his crucifixion were ſuch, as were calculated to give the greateſt ſatisfaction poſſible. The firſt of them were

made when, it is evident, his diſciples had no expectation whatever of any ſuch event, ſo that they could not have been impoſed upon by their fond imaginations. For though Jeſus had plainly appriſed his diſciples that he was to be put to death, and that he ſhould riſe again on the third day, they had ſo fixed a perſuaſion that he was to be a great king, and conſequently not to die at all, that they probably concluded (as he had been uſed to ſpeak to them in figurative language) that by *death* he only meant ſome trial, or calamity, and that therefore by a *reſurrection* he meant his emerging from it. But whatever their ideas were, it is moſt evident from the hiſtory that they had no expectation either of his death, or of his reſurrection, and that his death only filled them with conſternation and deſpair, and did not at all lead them to expect his reſurrection.

After Jeſus had appeared in this unexpected manner to ſeveral of his diſciples, viz. to Mary Magdalene, to the two diſciples walking to Emmaus, to the ten who were aſſembled in the evening of the ſame day at Jeruſalem,

Jeruſalem, and probably to Peter alſo, he appointed a time and place when he would meet them all, at a ſufficient diſtance from the time of his ſpeaking. Conſequently, if any doubts remained on the minds of any of them, they had time to conſider what ſatisfaction they required, and might, of courſe, be prepared to get that ſatisfaction, which it is evident he never refuſed them, even offering himſelf to be handled, and examined by them at their leiſure, and eating and drinking along with them. Indeed, the marks of crucifixion on his hands and feet, and the wound in his ſide, were abundantly ſufficient to identify his perſon. What is recorded concerning Thomas was probably the caſe of many others; nor did his incredulity exceed that of the reſt, though he expreſſed it in a ſtronger manner; and the ſatisfaction that Jeſus gave to Thomas, he was, no doubt, as ready to give to any others of them.

3. The appearances were ſufficiently frequent, viz. four times on the day of reſurrection, firſt to Mary Magdalene, then to Peter, then to the two diſciples walking to

Emmaus, then to the Ten in the abſence of Thomas, and afterwards to all the Eleven. In Galilee he firſt appeared unexpectedly to Peter, John, and a few others, and then to more than five hundred at once. This muſt have been the great meeting by appointment, though particularly mentioned by Paul only. Another time he appeared to James, called his brother, or near relation, then to all the diſciples (who were more than an hundred) reſiding at Jeruſalem, when he went with them to the mount of Olives, and at leiſure aſcended above the clouds in their ſight. Though theſe are all the appearances that are particularly recorded, there were probably many more, for no one writer has mentioned all theſe, not even Paul, who ſeems to have intended to recite all that he could recollect at that time. None of theſe appearances, I would alſo obſerve, were at midnight, when perſons, ſuddenly awaking from ſleep, have not the perfect uſe of their ſenſes and judgment; but in the day; not at a diſtance, but quite near; and not tranſient, but of a ſufficient length of time.

Surely,

Surely, then, we are authorized to ſay that, as far as *numbers* were requiſite to give evidence concerning any particular event, theſe were quite ſufficient. For if the evidence of five hundred would not remove the doubts of any perſons, neither would that of five thouſand, or of any number whatever. They were alſo perſons who had every character of unexceptionable witneſſes, as they cannot be ſuppoſed to have been deceived themſelves, or to have had any motive to wiſh to impoſe upon others; becauſe they had no intereſt in doing it.

4. The appearances were continued to a ſufficient period, viz. the ſpace of forty days, which was certainly time enough for any perſons to recollect themſelves, to get over any impreſſion of ſurpriſe, and to be perfectly collected, ſo as to be put upon their guard againſt any cauſe of deception, and to examine and ſatisfy themſelves at their full leiſure.

Such is the direct evidence of the reſurrection of Jeſus, than which nothing can well be conceived to be ſtronger, reſting upon the teſtimony of a ſufficient number of

of the moſt competent witneſſes, not prepoſſeſſed in favour of an *expected* event, and who yet had time to recover from the ſurpriſe occaſioned by an *unexpected* one. It was alſo a teſtimony to which they all adhered through life, notwithſtanding the greateſt temptation that men could lie under to tell a different ſtory.

I ſhall now conſider ſome objections that have been made to this evidence.

1. It has been ſaid that Jeſus ought to have continued longer in a ſtate of death, as till the body had putrified, &c. ſo that the revival of it might have been the more extraordinary. In this view, no doubt, the evidence of a proper reſurrection might have been made more ſtriking. But then, though the evidence would have gained ſtrength in one way, it would, by this very means, have loſt much more in another. Not to ſay that a reſurrection from any ſtate of unqueſtionable death, is as much a proof of a real miracle, as from any other ſtate. That is, it required nothing leſs than a *divine power*, which is undoubtedly equal to the raiſing a man from death at any pe-

riod, as well as the making of any number of new men.

But had the reſurrection of Jeſus been at any conſiderable diſtance of time, the evidence of his *death*, and conſequently that of a miracle in his *reſurrection*, had not been ſo clear. For then it might have been ſaid that, in ſo long time, he might have recovered from the effect of a ſeeming death; that his diſciples had time to recover from their conſternation, and lay their ſchemes for any particular purpoſe; that, in ſo long an interval, the guard of the ſepulchre might have been more negligently kept, the ſeal on the ſtone might have been broken by ſome accident, and Jeſus, being alive, might have been conveyed away, and time given for his appearance, as raiſed from the dead.

But conſidering that Jeſus was taken down from the croſs, to all appearance at leaſt dead, and left in the ſtate of a corpſe, ſwathed in ſpices, late on Friday evening, and then left alone, in a cold ſepulchre, it was abſolutely impoſſible, whatever life may be ſuppoſed to have remained in him,

that

that he ſhould have appeared not only alive, but in perfect health and vigour, walking about, and converſing, as if nothing at all had been done to him, ſo early as at day-break on the Sunday following. In the evening of that day he walked from Jeruſalem to Emmaus, which was about eight miles, and alſo back again, and as ſpeedily as two men in health, and who made all the haſte they could, were able to do the ſame. This is the more extraordinary, conſidering the wounds that had been made in the *feet* of Jeſus. If a man had ſuffered nothing more than this piercing of his feet, in the rough manner in which it was, no doubt, done in the act of crucifixion, this walk alone would have been abſolutely impoſſible; and on the third day he would have been even leſs able to walk than on the firſt, from the inflammation of the wounds. There muſt, therefore, have been ſome miracle in the caſe; and if any miracle was performed, why not that of a real reſurrection?

It may be ſaid that the evidence of a real miracle would have been ſtill ſtronger, if

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the bones of Jeſus had been broken, like thoſe of the two thieves. But as the piercing of his feet, the wound in his ſide, and even the hanging ſo long on the croſs, muſt have effectually incapacitated him from walking abroad within two days, the breaking of his bones would have made no real addition to the evidence; the *impoſſibility* of his walking abroad being really the ſame in both caſes. There would have been a difference only in the caſe of *probabilities*, which vary with circumſtances. But any one natural and abſolute *impoſſibility* furniſhes as ſtrong an argument as another.

In this very important view, therefore, the leſs was the time that intervened between Jeſus' having been laid in the ſepulchre, and his appearance alive and well out of it, the ſtronger is the evidence of a divine interpoſition, and unbelievers would have had more to object if that interval had been longer, than they can have at preſent. Jeſus, we can now ſay, appeared alive and well ſooner than it was *poſſible*, in the ordinary courſe of nature, that he could have done. It was before the guard could have been

been relaxed, before the disciples could have recovered from their consternation; and especially before it was possible for him to have recovered from the languishing state in which crucifixion must have left any man; to say nothing of the wound he had received in his side, which alone, if it had missed any vital part, must have confined him, and have disabled him from going abroad, a very long time.

2. It may be proper to take some notice of the story that was propagated by the Jewish priests, who, when the guard fled at the appearance of the angel and the earthquake, bade them say that *the disciples of Jesus came by night, and stole him away while they slept.* This, however, was both in the highest degree improbable, and what is more, it would not have answered any purpose; so that they who had just before behaved in the most cowardly manner possible, must have risqued their lives for nothing. Indeed, such a story as this would hardly have been suggested by the enemies of Christianity, if any thing had been known at the time besides the earthquake, the appearance

pearance of the angel, and a ſuſpicion, perhaps a report, of the abſence of the body, and if any thing had occurred to them more plauſible at the time. So weak a defence almoſt amounts to a confeſſion of the weakneſs of the cauſe to be ſupported by it.

The improbability alone of any conſiderable number of men all ſleeping, whoſe buſineſs it was to keep awake, and not more than two or three hours, for which they had time enough to prepare themſelves by ſleeping the preceding part of the night (for this was the laſt watch, at break of day) and when the penalty of ſleeping was death; and that they ſhould all ſleep ſo ſoundly, as that the rolling of a large ſtone (ſo large that ſeveral women deſpaired of being able to move it) and this quite near to them, ſhould not awake any one of them, is far too great to be admitted.

The diſciples of Jeſus, if ſuch a ſcheme had come into their minds, diſpirited and diſperſed as they were, could have had no expectation of accompliſhing of it *undiſcovered*, even if there had been no guard at the ſepulchre. The city of Jeruſalem was

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at that time full of people, beyond any thing that we can have an idea of at preſent, being the time of paſſover, and when the moon was at the full, ſo that numbers of people (the houſes of the city not being ſufficient to receive them) would be walking about at all hours; and the ſepulchre was ſo near to the city, that it is now incloſed within the walls. In that climate, and that time of the year, there was no inconvenience in paſſing the whole night, and even ſleeping, in the open air. The preceding night Jeſus and his diſciples had paſſed in a neighbouring garden; and it is very probable that they had done the ſame before, ſince Judas expected to find them there. In theſe circumſtances, the diſciples could not have had any reaſonable expectation of removing the body undiſcovered.

Beſides, what would the removal of a mere corpſe, admitting that they might have had the courage, and addreſs, to ſucceed in ſo unpromiſing an attempt, have availed them? There would have been no evidence of a *reſurrection*, unleſs the

dead

dead man could have been exhibited alive, which it was certainly out of their power to do.

If a few of the disciples of Jesus had been so abandoned, and at the same time so stupid, as to have attempted an imposition of this kind, an imposition from which they could not have derived any imaginable advantage, how could they have made others believe a resurrection of which they saw no evidence? Would the mere absence of the body have satisfied Thomas (who, though one of the twelve, was certainly not in the secret), the five hundred who went by appointment into Galilee, or the thousands who were converted by Peter immediately after this event; and would none of them have abandoned so groundless a faith in time of persecution? Would not torture, and the prospect of death, have extorted a confession of the cheat from some of those who were in the secret.

Lastly, what prospect could the disciples of Jesus have had of being able to carry on the scheme that was begun by their master, without his power of working miracles, of

which they muſt have known themſelves to be deſtitute. It was, no doubt, the poſſeſſion of this power, and this alone, that emboldened them, diſappointed and diſpirited as they had been before, to perſiſt in the ſame ſcheme, and without this they would certainly have abſconded, and have been no more heard of. They were neither orators, nor warriors, and therefore were deſtitute of all the natural means of ſucceſs.

3. The objection that has been urged in the ſtrongeſt manner, and to which I muſt, therefore, give the more particular attention, is, that, after his reſurrection, Jeſus ſhould have appeared as publicly as he had done before his death, and eſpecially in the preſence of his judges, and of his enemies. This, they ſay, would have ſatisfied them, and the whole country, and of courſe all the world, ſo that no doubt would have remained on the ſubject.

But the reſurrection of Jeſus himſelf might not have conciliated thoſe who were only the more exaſperated at the reſurrection of Lazarus, at which themſelves were preſent,

preſent, from whatever ſource their obſtinacy and incredulity aroſe. The whole ſtory, how well ſoever atteſted, might have been laughed at in Greece and at Rome, where the Jews and every thing relating to them, were, without any examination into the ſubject, held in the greateſt contempt. Beſides, there would have been a want of dignity, and an appearance of inſult, unworthy of our Saviour's character, in thus oſtentatiouſly exhibiting himſelf before his enemies, and as it were mocking at their attempts to kill him.

I would farther obſerve, that though Jeſus did not appear to *all* his enemies, he did appear to *one* of them, and one whom no perſon will doubt to have been as prejudiced, and as inveterate, as any of them, viz. Paul. Now, as *this* enemy of Chriſtianity was convinced of the truth of the reſurrection, by Jeſus appearing to him in perſon, we cannot doubt but that, if it had ſuited the plan of Divine Providence, *all* the Jews might have been convinced by the ſame means, and have become Chriſtians.

But admitting that the conſequence of

ſuch a public appearance of Jeſus would have been the conviction of all that country, and of all that age, it would have been an unfavourable circumſtance with reſpect to the evidence at this diſtance of time, and ſtill more ſo in remoter ages. And the great object certainly was, that this important event ſhould be ſo circumſtanced, as that it ſhould preſerve its credit unimpaired to the end of time.

If we ſuppoſe that mankind in the moſt diſtant ages of the world had been aſked, What kind of evidence would ſatisfy *them*, with reſpect to the reality of an event which took place ſeveral thouſand years before they were born, they would certainly ſay; that, to give ſatisfaction to *them* who had no opportunity of examining into the fact themſelves, it ſhould have been ſo circumſtanced, as that beſides a ſufficient number of perſons atteſting the truth of it, friends and enemies, believers and unbelievers, ſhould clearly appear to have been ſufficiently *intereſted* to examine into the truth, while the fact was *recent*, and therefore while it was in their power to inveſtigate it thoroughly.

thoroughly. And this could only be in circumſtances in which ſome ſhould believe it and others not, and in which the believers ſhould have every temptation to renounce their belief, and their enemies every motive to detect the impoſture. But this could not have been the caſe if the reſurrection of Jeſus had been univerſally believed at the time, or in that age, and conſequently there had been no early perſecution of Chriſtians.

In theſe circumſtances, it might have been ſaid by unbelievers in remote ages, that, as no oppoſition was made to the progreſs of Chriſtianity, it did not appear to them that the reality of thoſe facts on which the belief of it is founded had been ſufficiently enquired into at the time, that it might have been found convenient (for reaſons now unknown, and at this diſtance inſcrutable) to make a change in the religion of the country; and that, as the rulers of it adopted the meaſure, it might, for any thing that appeared, have been originally a ſcheme of *theirs*; and that when the governors of any country intereſt

themſelves to promote any meaſure, it is always in their power to impoſe upon the vulgar; that private orders, for example, might have been given, that Jeſus, though ſuſpended on a croſs, ſhould not be much hurt; that the ſepulchre, being under ground, might have proper apartments adjoining to it, where there might be every accommodation that was requiſite for his complete recovery and refreſhment; and that a few leading perſons being in the ſecret, the reſt might be impoſed upon to believe the ſtory of a reſurrection, or any thing elſe.

Thus the origin of Chriſtianity, it might have been ſaid, did not materially differ from that of the ſeveral ſpecies of heathenism or Mahometaniſm, which the people firſt believed without any proper enquiry, and to which their deſcendants adhered becauſe they had been received by their anceſtors before them.

But the circumſtances attending the actual promulgation of Chriſtianity were ſuch, as that nothing of this kind can ever be advanced by any unbelievers, at all acquainted

with the hiſtory of the times; becauſe it is evident, that Jeſus Chriſt, and his religion, and eſpecially the account of his reſurrection, on which the whole of it hinged, immediately engaged the cloſeſt attention of great numbers, and that thouſands felt themſelves intereſted in the higheſt degree to examine into the truth of it.

In the firſt place, the apoſtles, and other primitive Chriſtians, were certainly intereſted not to give up their eaſe, their little fortunes, and their lives, for an idle tale. And, on the other hand, the chief prieſts and rulers of the Jews, who had been ſo much exaſperated at Jeſus as to procure his death, even with ſome riſque to themſelves, from his popularity with the common people, would feel themſelves more ſtrongly intereſted to ſuppreſs his followers, and his religion, after his death; and this they evidently did, without loſing any time in the buſineſs.

Not more than fifty days elapſed between the crucifixion of Jeſus and the moſt open publication of the account of his reſurrection, an event ſpoken of even before his

death, againſt any impoſition with reſpect to which all poſſible precautions had been taken, and concerning which many rumours muſt have prevailed from the paſſover to Pentecoſt (for no ſecrecy was enjoined with reſpect to it) from the very day of his appearance. On the day of Pentecoſt, however, it was boldly aſſerted by ſuch a number of perſons, who were witneſſes of the fact, that ſome thouſands (who had themſelves ſeen the miracles of Jeſus) were fully convinced of its truth, and gave public teſtimony of their faith by being immediately baptized.

Obſerve in how full and explicit a manner Peter, on this occaſion, gave his teſtimony, as quoted in the preceding Diſcourſe, Acts ii. 22. *Ye men of Iſrael, hear my words. Jeſus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and ſigns, which God did by him, in the midſt of you, as ye yourſelves alſo know; him ye have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and ſlain. This Jeſus hath God raiſed up, whereof we all* (and about one hundred and twenty were then with him) *are witneſſes.*

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The boldneſs of the apoſtles in giving this public teſtimony to the reſurrection of Jeſus, a teſtimony which his audience evidently could not contradict, exaſperated the rulers of the country to the higheſt degree; and the event being then recent, they would, no doubt, do every thing that men, and men in power, could do in order to diſcover the cheat, if any ſuch had been uſed.

This endeavour to ſuppreſs Chriſtianity began in the very country, and in the very city, in which it was firſt promulgated, where Jeſus had always appeared in public, and conſequently where himſelf, and all that he had done, were known to thouſands. And this violent oppoſition, than which we know of nothing in the hiſtory of mankind more violent, and which began as early as it was poſſible for it to begin, was continued by the Jews, with very few interruptions, till it was taken up by the Romans, who were alarmed at the rapid ſpread of the new religion, which ſoon appeared to be hoſtile to all the old ones, on the obſervance of which it was univerſally

imagined

imagined that the temporal proſperity of ſtates depended. And this perſecution of Chriſtianity did not end till about three hundred years after its promulgation, that is, till all farther ſcrutiny into the facts was equally impoſſible and needleſs.

Did not this ſituation of things moſt ſtrongly invite all perſons to make the moſt rigorous inquiry into the truth of the facts on which Chriſtianity was founded, and eſpecially that of the reſurrection of Jeſus? Would not all the five hundred as long as they lived (and according to Paul many of them were living in the year 52, and the apoſtle John, it is ſuppoſed, did not die till about A. D. 90) be continually ſpeaking of it, and examined concerning it. This would certainly be the caſe if any ſuch event had happened at this day, and human nature we cannot doubt to have been the ſame in all ages.

What, then, could any of thoſe who are now unbelievers in Chriſtianity have done, if they had been living at the time of the promulgation of it, more than other unbelievers then did, who, whatever elſe they might

might do, or ſay, could not diſcover any marks of impoſture. No other facts in the whole compaſs of hiſtory, we may ſafely venture to aſſert, ever underwent a thouſandth part of the inveſtigation that, from the nature of the circumſtances, *theſe* muſt have done; and, what is of particular conſequence, at the time when the inveſtigation was the moſt eaſy.

Though Jeſus did not appear in public after his reſurrection, the miracle of *the deſcent of the Holy Spirit*, enabling the apoſtles and other diſciples to ſpeak intelligibly languages which they had not been taught, and alſo many other miracles wrought by them, were as public as poſſible; and every miracle wrought by the apoſtles was, in fact, a proof of the reſurrection of their maſter. If his miſſion, confirmed by, and implying the truth of, his reſurrection, was not from God, neither was theirs; for both were part of the ſame ſcheme, and therefore they imply one another.

Thus our faith does not reſt on the teſtimony of the four evangeliſts, Matthew, Mark,

Mark, Luke, and John, who wrote the hiſtory of Chriſt, and of the promulgation of Chriſtianity. We have, in fact, the teſtimony of the age in which they lived, to the great events recorded by them. Theſe books, or ever ſo many of the ſame nature, could never have been received, and tranſmitted to us, as authentic hiſtories, in the circumſtances that I have deſcribed, if the contents of them could have been queſtioned.

The inconſiſtencies that we diſcover in the accounts of the four evangeliſts imply no defect in the evidence; being no greater than are uſually found in the narratives of any important event written by different perſons; who will always attend chiefly to what is moſt eſſential to the ſtory, and leſs to the minute circumſtances of it; and theſe narratives were all written a conſiderable time after the event. But the moſt important conſideration is, that theſe hiſtories were not the cauſe of the belief of the reſurrection of Jeſus, but were themſelves among the conſequences of that belief, the proper evidence having produced

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its full effect long before they were written; ſo that it could not have been deficient in any material reſpect.

That all mankind were not immediately convinced of the truth of Chriſtianity may be ſufficiently accounted for; as, from the little intereſt that great numbers take in any thing relating to *religion*; from the averſion which the greateſt part of mankind have to examine into any thing that is *new*, when it is hoſtile to that which is *old*, and their liſtening to any idle tales to the prejudice of thoſe who teach it, which we ſee every dy. And if the powerful, the learned, and the polite, whoſe prejudices, eſpecially againſt any thing that originates with the *illiterate*, are well known to be as ſtrong as any prejudices whatever, would not read or think ſeriouſly on the ſubject (which was evidently the caſe with the generality of the Greek and Roman philoſophers, and other perſons of diſtinction at that time) many would be influenced by their example, and join in a blind oppoſition to what they had never conſidered, from imagining that it was not worth their while to conſider it.

Beſides

Beſides all this, we are to conſider the great numbers who were, directly or indirectly, intereſted in the ſupport of the old eſtabliſhed ſyſtems of religion, who would feel themſelves exaſperated, and therefore, without any enquiry into the merits of the caſe, would, with all their might, oppoſe the progreſs of the new religion. Such would be the caſe with many perſons of eminence and influence; and the lower orders, the mob, might be inflamed by any idle tales. This is nothing more than the common fate of all reformers, and all reformations in matters of religion. It flows from the common principles of human nature, which are the ſame in all ages, and which operate in the ſame manner in all ſimilar circumſtances.

In this ſtate things continued as long as they poſſibly could, the friends and the enemies of Chriſtianity being equally intereſted to diſcover the truth, while the facts were at all recent, and moſt eaſy to be inveſtigated; and the new religion eſtabliſhed itſelf gradually, as, if founded on truth, and unaided by power, it naturally would do in

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ſuch circumſtances. The attention of the more diſpaſſionate and diſintereſted was gradually gained, and converts were in time made of ſome men of learning, who were capable of writing in defence of Chriſtianity, and whoſe writings made other converts, both philoſophers and others.

At length the converts to Chriſtianity in all places, and eſpecially in thoſe that were the neareſt to the ſcene of the tranſactions, were ſo numerous, that the old religion ſunk into general contempt and neglect; and in leſs than three hundred years after the promulgation of Chriſtianity, we ſee that, notwithſtanding the deep-rooted attachment of all the heathen world to the religion of their anceſtors, Conſtantine could ſafely declare himſelf a Chriſtian, without any apprehenſion from his competitors, who endeavoured to avail themſelves of that circumſtance. None of them, however, were able, by this means, to throw any conſiderable obſtacle in his way, and he reigned almoſt in peace, and a longer time than any of the emperors after Auguſtus.

This is a clear proof of the preceding

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ſpread of Chriſtianity, and of the hold which it had got on the minds of the people in general; and this was in the moſt diſadvantageous circumſtances that can be imagined, if it had been an impoſture. But this moſt ſtriking evidence of the truth of Chriſtianity we could not now have had, if the evidence of the reſurrection of Jeſus had been ſuch, as to have convinced all the Jews, and all the world, as ſoon as he appeared. What had been the moſt ſatisfactory to *them* would have been (from the nature of the thing) the leaſt ſo to *us*.

When the perſecution of Chriſtianity began, the facts on which it was founded were recent, ſo that it was in the power of men of ſenſe and enquiry to ſatisfy themſelves concerning them; and we have ſeen that they were ſufficiently intereſted ſo to do. But if one whole generation ſhould have been, as we ſay, *infatuated*, ſo as to have taken up the belief of theſe facts without any ſufficient reaſon, the next generation might have been ſenſible of this, and have made more diligent ſearch (and then it was not too late) and not have thrown away

away their fortunes and their lives for nothing, as their fathers had done before them. But notwithſtanding this, every enquiry continued to make more converts, till, without any aid from power, or from learning in the firſt inſtance, the new religion completely eſtabliſhed itſelf on the ruins of the old, and was embraced by perſons of all ranks without diſtinction, the rich and the poor, the philoſophers and the vulgar.

If all this could take place without there being any truth in the hiſtory of the miracles, the death, and the reſurrection of Jeſus, it muſt have been more extraordinary, nay, ſtrictly ſpeaking, more miraculous, than thoſe events themſelves. For human nature was the ſame then that it is now; and that *men*, ſuch as we now find them to be, ſhould, in the circumſtances that I have now deſcribed, have been impreſſed as the early converts to Chriſtianity were; that they ſhould have been induced to believe a ſtory which they might eaſily have diſcovered to be deſtitute of all foundation, and have ſacrificed ſo much as they did to their belief, muſt have been the greateſt of all

miracles; no natural cauſe being adequate to ſuch an effect. It muſt alſo have been ſo ſtupendous a miracle (operating on *the minds of men*, which is more extraordinary than any effect that is apparent to the ſenſes) without any rational end or object. Nay the Divine Being muſt have wrought this miracle with no other view than to puzzle and confound his creatures, and to involve ſome of the moſt deſerving of them in the greateſt calamities. On the other hand, the miracles which gave birth to Chriſtianity had the greateſt and nobleſt of all objects, the inſtruction and reformation of the world. In fact, the proof of Chriſtianity ſupplies the only probable method of accounting for paſt and preſent *appearances*, and therefore what a true *philoſopher*, whoſe object it is to enquire into the *cauſes of things*, will adopt, in preference to any other.

It was, however, you clearly ſee, of the greateſt advantage to the evidence of the truth of Chriſtianity in diſtant ages, that the bulk of the Jewiſh nation ſhould from the beginning have been hoſtile to it; while

while at the ſame time the belief of ſuch numbers of them, prejudiced as they muſt all have been againſt it, is an abundant proof of its truth. But when, by the long continued enmity of the Jews to the Chriſtians, it ſhall be ſufficiently evident, that it was no ſcheme of that nation in general, and that, ſo far from giving it any aid in its infant ſtate, they diſcountenanced it as much as it was in their power to do it; if ever they ſhould be converted to Chriſtianity, before or after their return to their own country (both which events are foretold in the Scriptures) it will be ſuch a clear fulfilment of prophecy, as it ſeems probable that no power of incredulity will be able to reſiſt; and then, as Paul ſays, Rom. xi. 15. *If the caſting away of the Jews be the reconciling of the world, what ſhall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?*

I ſhall conclude this part of my diſcourſe with obſerving, that the truth of Chriſtianity is founded upon plain *facts*, ſuch as any perſons who had the uſe of their ſenſes might be judges of. Opinions of other kinds men may become ſo fully perſuaded

of, as even to die for them, as well as Chriſtians have done for their religion; but then the *nature* and *ground* of their faith have been different; they having been either miſled by an *implicit faith* in perſons who they thought could not miſlead them, or by *reaſoning wrong*. That Mahomet, for example, or Swedenborg, had divine miſſions, many might be induced to believe on their own confident aſſertions, having a good opinion of the men; or they might imagine that the conqueſts of Mahomet and his followers, could not have been ſo great and ſo rapid, if his pretenſions had not been well founded. But is this ſuch *kind* of evidence as that on which we believe the truth of Chriſtianity; which neither requires that implicit faith be given to any perſon, nor any reaſoning, except the plaineſt of all, viz. that if any perſon do ſuch works as God only could enable him to do, he muſt be empowered by God to do them, and the evidence of their own ſenſes that ſuch works were done? The truth of Chriſtianity reſts on the evidence of ſuch viſible marks of divine power as

the inſtant curing of the moſt dangerous diſorders, and the raiſing of perſons, and eſpecially of Jeſus himſelf, from a ſtate of actual death, with reſpect to which men who had only eyes, ears, and other natural ſenſes, could not poſſibly be deceived; whereas no viſible miracle of any kind was ſo much as pretended to by either Mahomet or Swedenborg.

We alſo ſee the great difference of the ground of belief in theſe caſes in the time that was requiſite to produce their effect. Mahomet was ſeveral years in perſuading any beſides a very few perſons, particularly connected with him, and who had a proſpect of being gainers by his ſucceſs, of his divine miſſion, and it was thirteen years before he had followers enow to venture to take the field with them, ſo as to attack a caravan, to which they were led by the hope of plunder. As to Swedenborg, though he died ſeveral years ago, his followers are only juſt now beginning to make themſelves conſpicuous. On the contrary, it is evident that Jeſus might, if he had been ſo diſpoſed, have muſtered as large an army

as he choſe within a month or two after he appeared in a public character.

Some are ſo incredulous as to ſay, that, admitting all the facts recited in the goſpel hiſtory, viz. that the apoſtles, and other diſciples of Jeſus, had no doubt of his reſurrection, and that their previous incredulity was overcome by the moſt ſatisfactory evidence; yet that it was more probable that their ſenſes, that of feeling, as well as thoſe of ſeeing and hearing, were repeatedly impoſed upon, than that there ſhould have been a proper reſurrection of a man who had been dead. But ſuch a deception as this could not have been effected without a miracle; and for what end could ſuch a miracle have been wrought? As it had all the effect of a real reſurrection, it is liable to all the ſame objections, and therefore if the one was produced, the other might be alſo.

If any perſon will ſay either that the appearances recorded in the New Teſtament are no proofs of a real reſurrection, or (which has alſo been ſaid) that the real reſurrection of Jeſus would be no proof of his

his divine miſſion, and of the truth of his religion, ſo that we could not thence infer the certainty of our own reſurrection, they muſt be ſo conſtituted, as that no evidence whatever can produce that conviction in their minds. The Divine Being himſelf (and I muſt in this argument ſuppoſe that there is ſuch a Being) could not do it. For all that *he* could do to atteſt the divine miſſion of any perſon could only be his enabling him to work miracles, or to do ſuch things as only he himſelf, the author of nature, could do. But no perſon, in the age of the apoſtles, or any ſubſequent one, ever believed the facts, and doubted the concluſion; ſo that the miracles were fully adequate to the purpoſe of them; and ſince all men are, no doubt, conſtituted alike, the preſent objectors muſt be under the influence of a prejudice that nothing can overcome, and this muſt be a caſe exactly ſimilar to inſanity.

I now proceed to ſhew that the ſolution of ſuch difficulties as theſe, reſpecting the truth of *revealed religion*, may aſſiſt thoſe who have ſimilar difficulties with reſpect to

natural religion; and all great moral truths have, directly or indirectly, a connexion with each other.

Now it ſeems to be impoſſible for any perſon to be convinced by hiſtorical evidence (which is the moſt intelligible of all evidence whatever) of the miracles, the death, and reſurrection of Chriſt, and at the ſame time to have any doubt of the being and the providence of God, becauſe the one evidently implies the other. If Chriſt actually wrought miracles, and, after dying, roſe from the dead, there muſt have been a *power* that enabled him ſo to do; and this muſt have been an intelligent, or a deſigning, and a benevolent power, the laws of nature having been changed for great and good purpoſes.

It is in vain for any perſon to ſay, as ſome, however, have done, that till we be ſatisfied with reſpect to the being of a God, which, in the order of nature, is the firſt of all religious truths, it is to no purpoſe to inquire into the evidence of chriſtianity. For though it be moſt convenient to *teach*, and to *conſider*, any ſyſtem of truths in a certain

certain order, the *diſcovery* of them is altogether independent of that order. In this caſe, *the firſt may be laſt, and the laſt firſt.*

An Engliſhman, for example, may ſay, and plauſibly enough, that he ought to underſtand his own country, before he explores any other. But it may happen that he ſhall be carried to Aſia, Africa, or America, before he can have ſeen much of his own country, and thereby have a better opportunity of exploring *them* than his own. Or, conſidering the ſun as the centre of our ſyſtem, he might fancy that, till we know what that great body is, it is abſurd to give much attention to the *planets*, which depend upon it. But in this way he might live and die without acquiring any knowledge of them at all. Even the ſeveral propoſitions in ometry may be learned in a very different order, as the different treatiſes on that branch of ſcience evince, and yet be all equally well underſtood at the laſt. In like manner may men attain to the knowledge of God, and of his pro-

vidence,

vidence, without beginning with the ſtudy of them.

An atheiſt is a perſon who believes that there is no Being who eſtabliſhed the preſent order of nature, but that all things have always been as they now are, and that all deviations from this order are abſolutely impoſſible, and therefore incredible. Conſequently, any clear proof of an actual deviation from this order of nature overturns his whole ſyſtem. The atheiſt ſays that, ſince we muſt ſuppoſe ſomething to have been *uncauſed*, we may juſt as well content ourſelves with ſaying that the preſent viſible ſyſtem had no cauſe, as ſuppoſe that ſomething ſtill greater than this ſyſtem, and the cauſe of it, had no cauſe; ſince by aſcending higher, we get no nearer to the ſolution of our great difficulty, viz. the *cauſe of what exiſts*. But the proof of any miracle is deciſively in favour of the actual exiſtence of a power unqueſtionably above the common courſe of nature, and different from it. This is no leſs than a demonſtration, that the reaſoning of the atheiſt, however ſpecious, is *in fact* wrong;

and that, difficult as it may be to conceive the ſelf-exiſtence, as we ſay, of a Being greater than the viſible univerſe, ſuch a Being certainly does exiſt. I ſhall endeavour to make this argument ſtill plainer by an illuſtration.

Let a perſon unacquainted with clocks, watches, and other machines, be introduced into a room containing many of them, all in regular motion. He ſees no maker of theſe machines, and knows nothing of their internal ſtructure; and as he ſees them all to move with perfect regularity, he may ſay, on the principles of the atheiſtical ſyſtem, that they are *automata*, or ſelf-moving machines; and ſo long as all theſe machines continue in regular motion, and he knows nothing of the making of them, or the winding of them up, this theory may appear plauſible.

But let us ſuppoſe that, coming into this room again and again, and, always attending to the machines, he ſhall find one of them much out of order, and that at length its motion ſhall intirely ceaſe; but that after continuing in this ſtate ſome time, he ſhall

again

again find it in perfect order, moving as regularly as ever. Will he not then conclude that ſome perſon, whom he has not ſeen, but probably the maker of the machines, had been in the room in his abſence? The reſtoration of motion to the diſordered machine would impreſs his mind with the idea of a *maker* of them in a much more forcible manner than his obſerving the regular conſtruction, and uniform motion of them. It muſt convince him of the exiſtence of ſome perſon capable of *regulating*, and therefore probably of *making*, theſe machines, whether he ſhould ever ſee this perſon or not.

Thus do miracles prove the exiſtence of a God in a ſhorter and more ſatisfactory manner than the obſervation of the uninterrupted courſe of nature. If there be a Being who can *controul* the courſe of nature, there muſt be one who originally *eſtabliſhed it*, in whatever difficulty we may ſtill be left with reſpect to his nature, and the manner of his exiſtence. We are compelled by a greater difficulty to admit a leſs, though acknowledged to be great.

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At all events, we ſee in miracles that there certainly exiſts a Being ſuperior to ourſelves, or any thing that is the object of our ſenſes.

And thus is demonſtrated the wiſdom of the general plan of Divine Providence, in ordering that the laws of nature ſhould not always proceed without interruption, but in providing that the attention of mankind ſhould ſometimes be arreſted by miraculous events; ſince they are eminently calculated to lead the minds of men to the conſideration of a ſuperior Being, as the cauſe of all events, ordinary and extraordinary. Thus alſo is evident the folly and ignorance of thoſe who think all miraculous events to be ſo abſurd as to be in their own nature incredible, and therefore that no evidence in their favour can deſerve the leaſt attention. If the reverence of mankind for their Maker be of any uſe, or of any conſequence to their happineſs, which undoubtedly it is, occaſional miracles have the greateſt propriety, and therefore great antecedent credibility, though all the particular

ticular facts require very circumſtantial evidence, becauſe they are not of frequent occurrence.

I now come to draw ſome practical inferences from the doctrine of the reſurrection of Jeſus.

Such is the evidence of the reſurrection of Jeſus, excluſive of the general evidence of chriſtianity, or of the miracles of Jeſus, and thoſe of the apoſtles after him, which are alſo another confirmation of the truth of this one great event. And, ſurely, it appears that the circumſtances attending the reſurrection of Jeſus were ſo ordered by Divine Providence, that it is not in the power of man to imagine any change in them that, according to the known laws of evidence, would make it more credible than it is with reſpect to diſtant ages. Every objection that has hitherto been made to this evidence has led to a more rigorous examination of the circumſtances; and the conſequence of this has always been an addition of light upon the evidence, and a greater confirmation of it. We are therefore abundantly authorized to conſider our faith

faith as *founded upon a rock*, which no future objection will be able to ſhake.

Since, therefore, we may conſider it as a certain and unqueſtionable fact, that *Chriſt is riſen from the dead*, we may likewiſe, with the apoſtle, conſider him as *the firſt fruits of them that ſleep*, or that his reſurrection is a pledge and aſſurance of our own, which it is the great object of chriſtianity to inforce. Chriſt is called the *firſt fruits*, and theſe are the forerunners of a general harveſt. *Afterwards*, ſays the apoſtle, *they that are Chriſt's, at his coming.* For Chriſt has only left the preſent ſcene for a time. If there be any truth in the facts, the evidence of which has now been laid before you, he will certainly come again, and that *with power and great glory*, to raiſe the dead, and to give unto every man according to his works.

Let us, therefore, my chriſtian brethren, be continually looking for this great event, this *great day of God*, as it is ſometimes called. For to all of us it is *nigh, even at the doors.* Long as the ſleep of death may really be, it will appear to each of us to be

be only a moment. In death we, as it were, only ſhut our eyes upon this world, and immediately open them in another, with the brighteſt and moſt glorious proſpects, if our converſation has been ſuch as becomes the goſpel, but with the moſt gloomy and dreadful ones, if this great light *hath come into the world, and we have loved darkneſs rather than light, becauſe our deeds were evil.*

The mere profeſſion of chriſtianity will avail us nothing, nay much leſs than nothing, becauſe it lays us under ſtronger obligations to a virtuous life, and therefore will aggravate our condemnation if we do not live as, by ranking with chriſtians, we profeſs to live. Better, far better, would it be for us, at the day of judgment, to be able to ſay we had never heard of Chriſt, than *naming the name of Chriſt*, or profeſſing his religion, not to have been thereby led to *depart from iniquity*, and to be to him *a peculiar people zealous of good works.*

Chriſtianity is much leſs to be conſidered as a ſyſtem of doctrines, than as a rule of practice.

practice. Nay the doctrines themſelves (the chief of which is that of a future ſtate of retribution) have no other object than the regulation of our lives. What the great duties of the chriſtian life are, we are all ſufficiently acquainted with. They are comprehended in two great precepts, the firſt of which is the love of God with all our hearts, implying an intire and chearful devotedneſs to his will, in doing and in ſuffering, in life and in death. And the ſecond is the loving of our neighbour as ourſelves, implying a readineſs, in all caſes, to do to others as we ſhould think it right that they ſhould do to us. We ſhould all habitually conſider one another as brethren, the children of the ſame great univerſal parent, the care of the ſame benevolent providence, as training up in the ſame ſchool of moral diſcipline here, and as heirs together of the ſame glorious hope of eternal life hereafter.

To fit us for theſe devotional and ſocial duties, we ſhould alſo be careful to exerciſe a conſtant government over our appetites and paſſions, that, as the apoſtle ſays, we

may preſerve ourſelves as the *unpolluted temples of the ſpirit of God.*

Thus, my Chriſtian brethren, *knowing our duty, happy ſhall we be if we do it*; that when our Lord, after his long abſence, ſhall return to *take an account of his ſervants*, when *our eyes, and when every eye, ſhall ſee him, we may have confidence, and not be aſhamed before him at his coming*; but having duly improved the talents committed to each of us, may hear from his mouth the joyful ſentence, *Well done good and faithful ſervants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.*

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XII.

A View of Revealed Religion.

——*That the God of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Father of glory, may give unto you the ſpirit of wiſdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your underſtanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the ſaints, and what is the exceeding greatneſs of his power, to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Chriſt, when he raiſed him from the dead.*

EPHES. i. 17—20.

THE apoſtle, writing to thoſe who had lately been heathens, frequently, and very properly, reminds them of the great benefit they derived from the knowledge of the

goſpel. This he does more eſpecially in the introduction to this epiſtle to the Epheſians. It is, indeed, of great importance that our minds ſhould always be impreſſed with a ſenſe of what we owe to the fountain of all good in this moſt important reſpect, eſpecially as, having never ourſelves ſeen, or known, much of heatheniſm, we are too apt to think leſs of the happineſs of our emancipation from it. And as I am now come to the concluſion of theſe Diſcourſes on the Evidence of Divine Revelation, I ſhall endeavour to bring to your recollection the ſeveral particulars of which the knowledge we derive from revelation, and more eſpecially from Chriſtianity, conſiſts.

But I ſhall firſt conſider the propriety of having recourſe to any meaſures whatever on the part of the Divine Being, farther than the natural means that he had employed for the moral improvement of mankind.

That the Divine Being has really made proviſion for promoting the virtue and happineſs

pineſs of men in the conſtitution of nature and of the world, is not to be denied. There are numberleſs particulars in the make of our bodies, and in the faculties of our minds, which, if attended to, will teach us that vice and wickedneſs (conſiſting in the exceſſive and irregular indulgence of our paſſions) is hurtful to man; that it tends to debaſe our natures, and ſubjects us to pain and anguiſh; and that if we would live in the greateſt dignity and happineſs, we muſt live in the habitual practice of all virtue. Some will, therefore, aſk, Is not nature alone a ſufficient guide to virtue and happineſs? and may not men, by theſe helps, and the proper uſe of the *reaſon* with which they are endued, be their own inſtructors? Why might not mankind have been left to themſelves, when their own reaſon, aſſiſted by obſervation and experience, would teach them to correct their vices, and improve their natures to the utmoſt? and when the Divine Being had done thus much for us, what occaſion was there for his doing any thing more?

In replying to this, it muſt be acknowledged that, if men would make the moſt of their reaſon, and conſcientiouſly obey all its dictates, it would be a ſufficient director in the conduct of life. But what muſt we ſay if, from whatever cauſe, and through whatever foreign influence, men become indiſpoſed to make this right uſe of their reaſon, and eſpecially if they be not ſufficiently apprized of all the conſequences of their conduct; and if, in that ſtate of ignorance and darkneſs, they want ſtronger *motives* than will ever occur to themſelves, to the practice of univerſal virtue. In theſe circumſtances it was ſurely highly expedient that the great parent and friend of mankind ſhould interpoſe, to apprize them of theſe conſequences, that he ſhould ſend proper perſons, duly authorized, to engage their attention, and thus to inform their judgment, intereſt their affections, and direct their conduct.

I muſt farther obſerve, in anſwer to thoſe who object to the ſcheme of ſuch *occaſional interpoſitions*, and who are ſtruck with the idea of the ſuperior dignity of an abſolutely

abſolutely uninterrupted operation of the *eſtabliſhed laws*, that we are not at liberty to ſuppoſe either *man*, or *the world*, to be conſtituted differently from what they are; becauſe we are no proper judges of ſuch different arrangements of things and their conſequences. And conſidering how men are actually conſtituted, we may ſafely conclude that if it was at all neceſſary (as we cannot but ſuppoſe it to be) that ſuch beings as we are ſhould keep up an *attention* to their Maker, this great end will be better anſwered by his maintaining ſome viſible intercourſe with them, than by a rigorous adherence to any original conſtitution of things whatever, while himſelf was kept out of view.

The bulk of mankind (and by this we are to judge) do not naturally inquire into the cauſe of what they ſee to be *conſtant* and *invariable*. They ſee, for example, the ſun to riſe and ſet, and all the changes of the ſeaſons to take place, without ever reflecting on their author, or final cauſe, or at leaſt acquieſcing in any lame account of

them; ſo that ſomething out of the common courſe of nature was neceſſary to arreſt their attention, and lead them to think of the Author of Nature, of what they ſee and experience every day.

The authors of the Greek and Roman theology never went farther in their ſpeculations than the *viſible univerſe*. They had gods in great abundance, but imagined the world to be more ancient than them all; and the great object of the moſt ancient idolatry were the ſun, moon, and ſtars, the earth, and other parts of *nature*, having never imagined that theſe had any author.

Beſides, in order that man may keep up an idea of God, as a *perſon*, a being with whom they have to do, as the inſpector and judge of their conduct, it ſeems neceſſary that there ſhould be on his part ſome *perſonal acts*, ſuch as promulgating laws, ſending meſſengers, expreſſing his pleaſure or diſpleaſure at their conduct, and the like. Without ſomething of this kind, the courſe of nature, though bearing infinite marks of intelligence, might never ſuggeſt the idea

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of an *intelligent perſon*, the proper object of prayer, a lawgiver, and a judge.

We clearly ſee this in the caſe of numbers who, diſbelieving revelation, do, at this day, ſeriouſly maintain that there is no intelligent principle in the univerſe, beſides the viſible works of nature. They, therefore, do not admit what we may call the *perſonality of the ſupreme cauſe of all*; and without this there will never be any ſuch thing as piety towards God, as a Being whom we conceive to be ever preſent with us, as the inſpector and the judge of our conduct. Theſe perſons never pray.

For want of this the beſt of the heathens were intirely deſtitute of that moſt eſſential branch of virtue. And without an habitual regard to God, as our common parent, there is no ſufficient foundation for the duties we owe to his offspring, or even the duties that reſpect ourſelves. Where there is no proper *lawgiver*, there can be no proper *law*. Without a proper regard to God in all our ways, our minds would be liable to be diſturbed and unhinged by the events of life, and we ſhould more eſpecially find

ourſelves

ourſelves deſtitute of power to carry us through ſevere trials and ſufferings in the cauſe of truth and a good conſcience. But an habitual reſpect to the being, the preſence, and the providence of God, extending through this life and the next, is abundantly ſufficient for all theſe purpoſes. It was therefore moſt truly ſaid by our Lord, *No man cometh to the Father but by me*, or, as we may interpret it, *revealed religion* is the only foundation of what is termed *natural religion*.

It is not only on the authority of the moſt probable *reaſons*, but on the evidence of the moſt indiſputable *facts*, that we aſſert the neceſſity of extraordinary interpoſitions on the part of the Divine Being, to engage the attention of mankind to himſelf, in order to reform the world, and reſtore the practice of virtue among men. We ſee in hiſtory how groſsly ignorant the heathen world remained of the nature and perfections of God, and of the purity of his worſhip, and how loſt they were to a juſt ſenſe of piety and virtue, while they were ſuffered to continue without ſupernatural revelation.

velation. And from the length of time in which the wiſeſt and moſt poliſhed nations continued in this ſtate of ignorance and corruption, it was manifeſt that natural means were not ſufficient to enlighten their minds, and reform their conduct. Theſe, as we are authoriſed to ſay, had been long tried without effect. For while arts and ſciences were cultivated, and brought to a conſiderable degree of perfection, religious notions, and religious rites, became, if poſſible, more abſurd. For after the worſhip of the ſun, moon, and ſtars (which was the original idolatry of mankind, and continued to be that of the more barbarous part of the world) the poliſhed Egyptians and Greeks added that of dead men. And how deplorable, in a moral reſpect, is the ſtate of thoſe parts of the world to which the knowledge of Chriſtianity has not reached, or in which its glorious and ſalutary light is extinguiſhed.

It was therefore a meaſure highly worthy of the wiſdom and goodneſs of almighty God, in order to accompliſh his gracious deſign of raiſing men to a ſtate of glory and

happineſs, to appoint ſome perſons to be, as it were, his embaſſadors to the world lying in darkneſs and wickedneſs, to inſtruct them in the truths relating to their moſt important concerns, and to lay before them, with plainneſs and energy, the proper motives for reforming their conduct; and it was neceſſary that, for this purpoſe, theſe perſons ſhould come with authority, bearing evident tokens of a divine miſſion, by the working of *miracles*, or ſuch works as men might be ſatisfied could not be performed without God (the author of nature, and who alone can control its laws) being with them.

With this view, if any hiſtory be credible, the Divine Being has actually commiſſioned various perſons to communicate his will to mankind, and eſpecially to warn them of the future conſequences of their evil conduct. Theſe perſons were chiefly of the nation of the Jews; and the object of their miſſions was to inſtruct their countrymen in the firſt inſtance, and then other nations who had intercourſe with them, in the fundamental principles of true religion,

in order to guard them againſt the abominable vices and extravagancies to which idolatry naturally led them. In like manner was Jeſus Chriſt (of the ſame nation of the Jews) commiſſioned to bring the laſt and moſt complete revelation of the will of God to man; ſo that nothing now remains to be done on the part of God for the moral inſtruction and reformation of the world.

What it is that God has by theſe repeated revelations done for mankind, and eſpecially by Jeſus Chriſt, I ſhall now proceed to ſpecify. But I muſt farther premiſe, that the great and ultimate object of the miſſion of Chriſt was not at all different from that of the preceding prophets. According to his own repreſentation, in the inſtructive parable of the vineyard let out to huſbandmen, God firſt ſent *ſervants* to them, to receive the fruits of the vineyard, and laſt of all, with the ſame general view, he ſent his *ſon*, or a perſon ſo much more diſtinguiſhed, as to be entitled to that peculiar appellation, though he was of *the ſame nature*

ture with them, *in all things like unto his brethren.*

1. By theſe extraordinary interpoſitions we have been inſtructed in the nature, perfections, and moral government of God, and the rule of human duty; a knowledge of a very important nature, and which mankind, after having been inſtructed in it, by *becoming vain in their imaginations*, had loſt. This knowledge we find in Moſes and all the prophets. There we find that God is one, that he made and governs the world, that he is every where preſent, obſerving the conduct of men, that he is merciful to the penitent, but will puniſh the obſtinately wicked. We are alſo taught in revelation how the one true God is to be worſhipped in the moſt acceptable manner, viz. *in ſpirit and in truth*, by purity of heart, and uprightneſs of life. According to Chriſt, the two great commandments, which include all the reſt, are the love of God and of our fellow-creatures.

Thus was laid the foundation of all acceptable worſhip, and right conduct in life, and

and thus were the minds of men freed from a ſlaviſh and debaſing ſuperſtition, which had taught them to ſeek to pleaſe God by other things than true goodneſs of heart and life, and had encouraged them to continue in the practice of vice, by truſting to vain compenſations and atonements. This was one of the moſt important ſervices that could be rendered to religion, and to mankind; as there is nothing to which they appear to be more prone than *ſuperſtition*, or unworthy notions of God, and conſequently wrong methods of ſeeking to pleaſe him.

Beginning with theſe leading principles, did our Lord, following the example of the prophets who had preceded him, go on to inſtruct mankind in every uſeful principle of religion, concealing from them nothing that could in any reſpect influence their practice. And this, we clearly ſee, had the moſt direct tendency to promote the great ſcheme of our redemption, or our deliverance from vice and miſery. For before men can be reclaimed from vicious courſes, they muſt be convinced of the evil of them.

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They muſt be ſhewn againſt how great a Being they are offending, and be informed what it is that will recommend them to his favour. Such knowledge as this is, in its own nature, neceſſary to all virtuous and religious practice. The judgment, or underſtanding, muſt firſt be enlightened, before the will can be renewed, the affections regulated, and the conduct reformed; as, in all caſes, a thing muſt be *underſtood*, before it can be *practiſed*.

This excellent moral inſtruction was not, however, as I have ſaid already, peculiar to Chriſt. He did not pretend to teach men any thing *new* on theſe ſubjects. He only explained and enforced what had long before been taught by Moſes and the prophets. But many of theſe excellent and moſt important moral precepts had been perverted, and the ſolid duties of piety, benevolence, and all virtue, had been made to give place to a moſt debaſing and miſchievous ſuperſtition. The ſame, indeed, has been the caſe with the moral precepts of Chriſtianity itſelf; ſo that there will always be great reaſon to caution men on this head, ſo

prone

prone are they to the indulgence of their appetites and paſſions, and ſo willing to find ſome ſubſtitute for moral virtue, if they can.

Chriſt did not teach any thing new concerning God, or the maxims of his government, becauſe theſe things were ſufficiently known to the Jews, and explained in their ſcriptures. The great doctrine of the *divine unity* was well underſtood, and taken for granted, by all the nation of the Jews. That there is *one God*, and there is *no other than he*, and that *to worſhip him with the heart, is better than all whole burnt-offerings and ſacrifice*, was a reply of a Jewiſh ſcribe to our Saviour, and which met with his perfect approbation.

Leaſt of all had he any occaſion to inform them that the Divine Being, the God and Father of all, as well as his own God and Father, was placable to his penitent creatures. This moſt neceſſary of all doctrines had been moſt clearly taught by Moſes and all the prophets; ſo that nothing farther remained to be ſaid on the ſubject. By Moſes the Divine Being ſolemnly proclaim-

ed himſelf to be *a God merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, abundant in mercy, goodneſs, and truth, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion, and ſin.* All the prophets exhorted to repentance on the ſame principle. *Return unto me, and I will return unto you,* is the conſtant burden of their preaching. Indeed, without this all exhortation to repentance would be in vain.

That Chriſt was himſelf, by his death and ſufferings, the means of reconciling men to God, and of making it to be conſiſtent with his juſtice to pardon the truly penitent, is a doctrine for which there is no countenance either in the diſcourſes of our Lord, or the writings of the apoſtles. They all took it for granted, that all that was neceſſary to be done was to reconcile ſinful man to God, not to reconcile God to man. In the fine parable of the prodigal ſon, Chriſt informs us that God, our true and affectionate Father, is ready to receive all his offending and penitent children, as it were, with open arms, without any interceſſion of others, or any atonement whatever. Through the whole of the ſcriptures

tures God is repreſented as forgiving ſin *freely*, and for *his mercy's*, or *his name's ſake only*.

2. To give the greater weight to their inſtructions, all the prophets of God, with ſome few exceptions, exemplified them by their own conduct.

But the benefit we derive from the example of good men recorded in the ſcriptures is only incidental, and is not to be conſidered as any proper part of the ſcheme of revelation. Nay the examples of bad men, equally recorded in the ſcriptures, or in other authentic hiſtories, may ſometimes be of as much uſe to us as that of good men. Since, however, as Chriſtians, we profeſs to be, and are exhorted to be, in a more eſpecial manner followers of Chriſt, I ſhall make a few obſervations with reſpect to this ſubject.

Now the example of Chriſt, like that of other good men, can only be of partial and occaſional uſe to us. In a great variety of the moſt trying ſituations our Lord was never placed, ſo that in thoſe caſes his life cannot furniſh any pattern for us. It is his

general temper and character that we are to attend to, and an attention to this may be of great uſe to us, even in ſituations in which he himſelf was never placed. What were moſt conſpicuous in him were the virtues of meekneſs, humility, heavenly-mindedneſs, and an intire devotedneſs to the will of God, in ſuffering as well as in doing; and with theſe diſpoſitions we ſhall in no particular caſe act wrong.

In obedience to the will of God, and to anſwer the great deſigns of his providence, he gave up his innocent life to the malice of his enemies, who put him to death in the moſt cruel and ignominious manner, in this, as well as in other things, leaving us an example that we ſhould follow his ſteps. *Foraſmuch as Chriſt ſuffered in the fleſh, we muſt arm ourſelves,* as Peter ſays, *with the ſame mind. Becauſe he laid down his life for us, we ought alſo,* as John ſays, *to lay down our lives for the brethren*; that is, we ought to ſerve mankind, at the hazard of every thing dear to us in life, and even of life itſelf.

Our Lord's great heroiſm in ſuffering

and

and dying as he did, will be more admired the more we conſider the circumſtances of it, eſpecially his extreme ſenſibility. That a man whoſe bodily frame was capable of ſuffering ſo much as he did under the mere *apprehenſion* of his approaching death, ſhould, notwithſtanding this, die with ſuch noble and calm fortitude, and with ſuch ſentiments of piety and benevolence even to his enemies, is indeed wonderful. There is alſo ſomething peculiarly trying in being the *firſt* to ſuffer in any cauſe. In bearing, however, not only pain, but hardſhips of various kinds (ſome of them more trying than any kind of violent death) and bearing them alſo with a truly Chriſtian ſpirit, it is for the honour of Chriſtianity, and conſequently of Chriſt, to ſay that many of the martyrs have not fallen ſhort of the pattern ſet them.

As to the more common infirmities of human nature, ſuch as the indulgence of ſenſual appetites and paſſions, we cannot ſuppoſe that the temptation to tranſgreſs would be much felt by a perſon of his exalted character, and great expectations, and

with a violent death in immediate proſpect. There is, therefore, nothing very extraordinary, though highly worthy of our imitation, in this part of our Saviour's conduct.

I ſhall cloſe this head with obſerving that, in all caſes in which the example of *men* cannot be recommended, that of the ever bleſſed *God* is propoſed to us in the ſcriptures. For we are exhorted to *be perfect as our Father who is in heaven is perfect.* This precept has the advantage of being an unerring rule of conduct. It will prevent our acquieſcing in any limited degree of moral excellence; and recourſe may be had to it with great advantage in thoſe caſes in which the ſupremacy of the Divine Being, and his infinite knowledge (by which he ever ſees the moſt diſtant conſequences of things, and by which he can bring good out of all evil) does not neceſſarily make the rule of *his* conduct different from that of *ours.*

3. In order to reform the world, and thereby raiſe men to a ſtate of future glory and happineſs, God has by Jeſus Chriſt, in a more

a more eſpecial manner, revealed to them the knowledge of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, as ſupplying the moſt effectual motive to the practice of virtue. This is, indeed, the diſtinguiſhing excellence of the goſpel. By this goſpel *life and immortality are fully brought to light*, as it affords a more ſatisfactory evidence of a reſurrection to a future and immortal life than had been given to the world before, ſo as to eſtabliſh the belief of this moſt important of all truths to the end of time. This great end Chriſt effected, not only by preaching the doctrine with authority from God, evidenced by miracles, even ſuch as raiſing the dead to life, but by being himſelf an example of what he announced to others; having ſubmitted to die in the moſt public and indiſputable manner, and having been raiſed to life, to the complete ſatisfaction of a ſufficient number of the moſt competent witneſſes.

Had mankind, in a body, been aſked what evidence they required for a doctrine ſo important and intereſting to them, they could not have demanded more than was

actually given them, viz. that the great preacher of the doctrine ſhould, in his own perſon, afford them an example of its truth, by dying and riſing again within a limited time.

This was no new doctrine to the Jews. The great body of that nation were then, and are to this day, fully perſuaded of it. This muſt, in my opinion, have ariſen from ſome very early revelation from God on the ſubject, but probably prior to the writing of the books of Moſes; whatever difficulty we may now find in accounting for the remarkable ſilence concerning a doctrine of ſo much importance in his writings, as well as thoſe of the Old Teſtament in general. Had this great revelation been made to Moſes himſelf, or to any of the ſubſequent prophets, we could not but have heard of it. But having been made known probably to our firſt parents, and, though it was loſt in other nations, having been always retained by the Jews, there was the leſs occaſion for any mention of it in books deſigned for their peculiar uſe. But what was well known to the Jews would be *good tidings of great*

great joy to the Gentile world, which was ignorant of it.

When *the fulneſs of time was come*, that God thought proper to manifeſt his paternal regards to all his offspring of mankind, it was highly proper that, as the original record of this great doctrine of a reſurrection was then loſt, it ſhould be renewed; that ſo no reaſonable doubt might remain concerning it; and this was completely effected by the reſurrection of Chriſt, who likewiſe brought it into view in all his diſcourſes. For he did not, like Moſes, give his diſciples any expectation of happineſs in this life, but only at the reſurrection of the juſt; and to this *great hope that was ſet before them*, he taught them cheerfully to ſacrifice all their intereſts here, and even life itſelf; aſſuring them that they who ſhould loſe their lives for the ſake of the goſpel, would receive them again, with infinite advantage, in the world to come. It was his expreſs declaration, that his kingdom was not of this world, and he enjoined all his followers to *lay up their treaſure in heaven*. We alſo learn from the apoſtle Paul that we

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are *to walk by faith and not by ſight*, ſince the *things that are ſeen are temporary, but the things that are unſeen are eternal.*

When God had by this means imparted to mankind this moſt important information concerning himſelf and his moral government, concerning their duty here, and their expectations hereafter, nothing more was requiſite in order completely to effect his great deſign, the reformation of the world, and the preparation of men for that future happy ſtate which is announced to us in the goſpel. For with theſe helps, the rational nature that God had originally given to man was ſufficient, without any ſupernatural operation upon their minds, to their reſtoration to his favour and their future happineſs. The hiſtorical evidence that we now have of the miracles, the death, and reſurrection of Chriſt, is of itſelf ſufficient to produce *Chriſtian faith*, or a firm belief of the great facts on which Chriſtianity reſts; and this faith, or belief, is ſufficient to induce men to reform their conduct, and to fit them, by a life of virtue here, for a ſtate of happineſs hereafter.

Accordingly, no farther help than this is ever promiſed to us in the goſpel. Like good ſeed, in our Saviour's moſt inſtructive parable, it is ſcattered promiſcuouſly on all kinds of ſoil; but nothing is done to the ſoil itſelf, and therefore it brings forth much fruit, or none at all, juſt as the minds of men were previouſly diſpoſed to receive it. The *gift of the ſpirit*, of which we read, always means ſome *miraculous power*, calculated for the confirmation of the goſpel in the early ages only. We are taught, indeed, to pray to God to be led into, and to be kept in, the ways of truth and virtue. But we are alſo taught to pray for our daily bread; and as our daily bread is not given to us without our own labour, ſo likewiſe good diſpoſitions of mind are only to be acquired by the uſe of proper means; though both the means, and the power of uſing them, being from God, it is right to aſcribe all to him, to pray to him for every bleſſing, temporal or ſpiritual, and to thank him for all of them alike.

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As a practical improvement of this doctrine, I ſhall obſerve (1.) that from it we may infer the dignity of human nature; man being a creature the moſt diſtinguiſhed by his great Creator among his works here below, in that we are the proper ſubjects of his moral government, and fit heirs of immortality. This implies that we are capable of unlimited improvement; and what we ſee of man in this life makes this probable. We ſee no bounds to increaſing knowledge and ripening virtue, though we, and all created beings, ſhall ever fall infinitely ſhort of the perfection of the ſupreme Being, who is, and ever will be, alone, the *abſolutely good.*

Let us then, my brethren, with all humility and gratitude to God, for every thing that we have, or are, reſpect ourſelves, as ſo greatly diſtinguiſhed by the Author of all excellence, and not careleſsly and wickedly abandon the glorious proſpects that are ſet before us. For a beggar in our ſtreets to reject the offer of a kingdom, would not be more prepoſterous. We can hardly

hardly form an idea of greater depravity of mind than for a man ſeriouſly to prefer utter annihilation to that immortality which is brought to light by the goſpel, and to maintain that the great and extenſive views it opens to us do not tend to enlarge and exalt the mind, and qualify men to act with more dignity, generoſity, and integrity, as well as true piety, in this life, in conſequence of being taught that the connexions and habits which we form here below, will be continued beyond the grave, where we ſhall again find ourſelves under the government of the ſame God, and be again happy in our ſubjection to him, and in our renewed intercourſe with each other, to all eternity. To maintain, as ſome have done, that this Chriſtian doctrine of a future ſtate has any hurtful tendency, appears to me to argue ſuch depravity of mind, as can only be produced by groſs vices, ſuch as make men ſecretly wiſh that it may not be true. Thouſands have found that the firm belief of it tends to make men *purify themſelves even as God is pure.*

2. Let us learn from this doctrine to

cheriſh a ſenſe of the great bleſſings of Chriſtianity, as the only means of giving men this glorious proſpect, and preparing them for future happineſs. For that any of the human race will ſurvive the grave nature gives us no reaſon to expect.

Chriſtians would have a much higher ſenſe of the value of the goſpel, if they had not forgotten what heatheniſm was. That ſuch vices as the heathens were addicted to, ſome of them too abominable and horrid to be mentioned in ſuch a place as this, ſhould have been encouraged by any thing that ever bore the name of *religion*, and even ſhould have been practiſed as *religious rites*, which recommend men to the object of their worſhip, would not now be credible, did not the moſt authentic hiſtory remain as an indiſputable evidence of the facts. Let us then bleſs God for the goſpel, which brings us from darkneſs to light, from vice to virtue, from death to immortality; and let us do every thing in our power to extend the knowledge and the bleſſings of it to all the human race. More eſpecially, as a means to the great end, let

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us exert ourſelves to purify it from thoſe corruptions which both defeat the great deſign of it, and prevent its reception among Jews, Mahometans, and heathens. This fatal tendency has every thing that, in any degree, renders it leſs amiable, or leſs credible; and nothing does this more than any infringement of the great doctrine of the *unity of God*, and the equity of his government.

3. All that I have repreſented having been done for us, the beſt inſtructions having been given us for a virtuous life, exemplified by the lives of holy men, of prophets, and of Jeſus Chriſt; having had the moſt ſatisfactory evidence given us of a future ſtate of retribution after death, nothing more could have been done to induce men to abandon a courſe of vice, and to live in ſuch a manner as to ſecure a happy immortality. If the nature of *virtue*, and of *man*, be conſidered, it will be evident that nothing more could have been done for us. The *will* cannot be forced. It can only be determined by proper motives. God requires that we ſhould give him our *hearts*, which

which can only be engaged by the force of perſuaſion.

As far, therefore, as it became the Divine Being to interpoſe, nothing has been left untried to reform the world. If then, notwithſtanding all theſe meaſures for our good, we continue diſobedient, and addicted to vice, may not the Divine Being with the greateſt propriety ſpeak of us as of the children of Iſrael of old? "What could I have "done to my vineyard more than I have "done; nevertheleſs, when I looked that "it ſhould bring forth grapes, it brought "forth wild grapes."

We cannot think that, after all this that has been done for us, we are at liberty to neglect and ſlight it, and that God will take no notice of our diſobedience and perverſeneſs. No, our ſins under the diſpenſation of the goſpel are attended with every aggravation that can heighten their guilt, and increaſe our condemnation. As the apoſtle ſays, *which way can we come off, or eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation.* Let it not be our condemnation, that *light is come into the world, but that we loved darkneſs*

neſs rather than light, becauſe our deeds were evil.

We who profeſs what we wiſh to be conſidered as *rational Chriſtianity*, have leaſt of all any juſt excuſe for a deficiency in that temper, and a want of thoſe good works, which our religion requires. We, depending upon the free mercy of God to the penitent, reject the idea of being ſaved by any righteouſneſs that is not our own. We believe that no man can obey the laws of God for another, or ſuffer the puniſhment due to the crimes of another; and we diſclaim the belief of any thing whatever ſtanding in the place of moral virtue. We believe the goſpel both to contain a ſufficient rule of life, and alſo ſufficient motives to the obſervance of it.

As therefore, my brethren, we not only *name the name of Chriſt*, and profeſs ourſelves to be his diſciples, but think that we profeſs it in greater purity than many others, let us give proof of it by departing farther from all iniquity, and by being *a peculiar people zealous of good works.* If this be not our reſolution, and ſteady uniform

conduct, there is not a nation under heaven that will not riſe up againſt us, and condemn us, at the laſt day. For no people ever enjoyed greater advantages than we do. If they neglect their advantages, which are inferior to ours, their condemnation will be proportionably leſs. But if they improve them, while we neglect ours, double will be their recompence, and double will be our condemnation. May we all ſeriouſly conſider theſe things, *the things that relate to our everlaſting peace and welfare, before they be for ever hid from our eyes.*

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

The Preface to the Diſcourſe on the Reſurrection of Jeſus.

THE following diſcourſe was compoſed while I was at Buxton, in the courſe of the laſt ſummer, in conſequence of being requeſted to preach to the company in the aſſembly-room, after the uſual morning prayers of the church of England. Having no ſermon with me that I thought ſo proper as I could wiſh for ſo mixed an audience, I compoſed *this*, which I thought would offend no chriſtian, but tend to confirm the faith of all; and which I alſo hoped might make a favourable impreſſion on unbelievers, ſome of whom it was probable would be my hearers. Both theſe objects I have reaſon to think were, in ſome meaſure, gained; and in compliance with the requeſt of ſome who were my hearers at that time, and of many others who have heard the diſcourſe, much enlarged and improved, ſince, I now publiſh it.

Let any man who is an object of diſlike, as I am to the clergy of the church of England, conduct himſelf with ever ſo much prudence and caution, I do not think it is poſſible for him to avoid giving offence. On this occaſion, however, I flattered myſelf that I had ſucceeded; but I have ſince found that I did not. A perſon, who I believe may be ſtiled a dignitary of the church of England, has been very free with his virulent invectives againſt me on this moſt innocent buſineſs; aſſerting, on the authority, he ſays, of thoſe who were preſent, and who, it is ſuppoſed, were alſo clergymen, that I, in a manner, forced myſelf upon the audience, by *requeſting* to preach to them, which he calls 'a moſt indecent intruſion *,' and that I took the opportunity of 'inſulting the faith and the ſervice of 'thoſe who attended it,' that by 'deſiring to have 'the litany omitted on that occaſion, I ſhewed the 'moſt pointed diſapprobation of the ſervice, and 'took upon myſelf to rule and direct the ſervice 'of the church of England;' that my diſcourſe 'gave great offence to ſeveral perſons of reſpectable underſtanding, who uniformly repreſented it 'as calculated to weaken the evidence of our 'Lord's reſurrection as a divine and miraculous

* The paſſages marked with inverted commas, are from the clergyman's own letter, which was written with deliberation, on purpoſe to be ſhewn to me.

'fact,

'fact, wrought in conformity to the antient pro-
'phecies;' that 'it was ſcarcely attended to with
'patience,' and that 'in oppoſition to the ſo-
'lemn ſervice which the congregation had juſt
'before offered to the trinity, and in contradiction
'to thoſe rules of the church, which forbid the
'maintaining of oppoſite doctrines by different
'preachers, I cloſed the whole with an unitarian
'prayer.' On the whole, he adds 'I eaſily
'perceive where this would end, if the Doctor's
'power was equal to the diſpoſition he has mani-
'feſted towards the church of England. There
'would be as little toleration of thoſe who ſhould
'uſe the liturgy, as there was in the days of
'Cromwell.'

All this, and much more, having, as I have been informed, been ſaid on the occaſion, it may not be amiſs to give the following ſhort account of the matter; and hundreds who were preſent can witneſs the truth, or falſehood, of the greateſt part of it.

Having, at the unexpected requeſt of the company at the inn where I lodged, read a ſermon to them on a Sunday evening; on the Tueſday following, General Stratton, and Mr. Sligo, a gentleman of fortune in Scotland, came to me, deputed, as they ſaid, by the company at the Grand Hotel, and the other houſes near the Baths, to

requeſt that I would give them a ſermon on the Sunday following. I replied that, if it was the wiſh of the company, I would readily comply with it; and returning my compliments to them, deſired them to name the time and place. Some time after this they came to me again, and ſaid that the company having conſidered of it, were of opinion that the moſt convenient place would be the aſſembly-room; and that the time that would beſt ſuit them all would be after their uſual morning ſervice, which however, with great liberality, they ſaid they did not deſire me to attend, as I might not approve of it; and that in this caſe I might be in the adjoining card-room till it was over.

Now, though I certainly do object, and very ſeriouſly, to do any thing that ſhould be conſtrued into a joining in trinitarian worſhip, or offering to any creature, how diſtinguiſhed ſoever, that homage to which I conſider the one true God, the *God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, to be alone entitled, I make no ſcruple of attending the worſhip of any human beings occaſionally, as a ſtranger and ſpectator; and I had no intention of abſenting myſelf on the preſent occaſion, till I found I could not prevail on the clergyman who read the prayers to ſhorten the ſervice, which, on account

account of the length of my diſcourſe, I wiſhed him to do.

Not ſucceeding in this, I took an opportunity ſome time after the prayers were begun, of retiring into the card-room, for the ſake of looking over my diſcourſe, and ſtriking out ſuch parts of it as could beſt be omitted. When this was done, I returned to the prayers before they were quite finiſhed. Still, however, my diſcourſe was conſiderably longer than uſual: but I was heard with the greateſt attention, nor did I perceive any marks of diſapprobation from any of the company. I concluded the ſervice with a ſhort prayer, addreſſed, as moſt of the prayers in the liturgy of the church of England are, to the Father only; ſo that if this was a contradiction to the trinitarian forms in the ſame liturgy, ſome of the prayers in this book are contradictory to the reſt.

After the ſervice, I was thanked not only by General Stratton and Mr. Sligo in the name, as they ſaid, of the company, but by many of the moſt reſpectable perſons preſent, ſome of whom avowed religious ſentiments with reſpect to the trinity very different from mine; and in conſequence of a previous invitation by the Provoſt of the univerſity of Dublin, I dined at the Grand Hotel, where ſome of the particulars of my ſer-

mon, being new to part of the company, were the ſubject of converſation, and every thing that I heard was much in favour of it. Several clergymen were preſent at my diſcourſe, and one of them, I was told, expreſſed much approbation of it. Others, it appears, were much offended at my being aſked to preach on this occaſion, and one of them, I was told, made an attempt, but without ſucceſs, to expreſs his diſapprobation, in a diſcourſe compoſed on purpoſe for the Sunday following. This, however, I did not know at the time, for the next morning I proceeded on my journey, and left the place.

Much of the offence that I gave on this occaſion was by 'taking upon me' (as this dignitary ſays) 'to perform a part of the miniſtry of the 'church of England, in a place of that deſcrip-'tion.' Now, not to obſerve, that the place in which I preached was not conſecrated, and that the appropriation of the building to the offices of any particular mode of religion was not a thing to be conſidered by *me*, but by thoſe who applied to me to officiate in it, I ſee no reaſon why chriſtians of the moſt oppoſite ſentiments may not meet to worſhip together, and edify one another, on principles that are common to them all, avoiding the introduction of any that would give offence. If I had an opportunity (which I would by no means decline)

decline) of preaching before a ſociety of high calviniſts, or the moſt rigid catholics, I would do it in ſuch a manner as not to offend any of them, and yet I ſhould have a ſufficient choice of topics on which to diſcourſe. For the moſt important articles, not only of chriſtian practice, but alſo of chriſtian faith, are thoſe in which all who ever called themſelves chriſtians are, and always were, agreed; nor ſhould I have any ſcruple to deſire any chriſtian miniſter, of whatever denomination, to preach for me, if I knew him to be a man of ſenſe and diſcretion, who would obſerve the ſame rule of prudence in my pulpit, that I ſhould make a point of doing in his.

I am not ſorry to have this opportunity of ſaying that I and my congregation gave this proof of our liberality in this reſpect the very laſt year, by inviting Mr. Berington, a catholic prieſt in the neighbourhood of Birmingham, to preach our annual Sunday-ſchool ſermon. All the ſubſcribers to that charity were convened on the occaſion, after it had been the ſubject of much converſation ſeveral weeks before; and on my propoſing it, it was cheerfully and unanimouſly acceded to; and one of the company very pleaſantly and properly ſaid that, as the devotional part of the ſervice on that occaſion would fall to me, he hoped that on that day I would omit praying for the downfal of

antichriſt; which I very readily engaged to do. The invitation was accordingly ſent, and as the reader will ſee, by a copy of the letters which he will find ſubjoined to this Preface, was very properly received, though it was not complied with, for prudential conſiderations, which I hope will not exiſt long.

I ſhould have been aſhamed of any congregation to which I officiate, had they made any difficulty of acting ſo liberal a part. We did not deſire Mr. Berington to celebrate maſs, or to do any thing elſe in which we could not concur with him; nor, I am confident, would he obtrude upon his audience any ſentiments that he knew would be diſpleaſing to them; and then what objection could there be to his principles as a catholic, when they did not appear? A Jew, or a Mahometan, might recommend charity, and what chriſtian could object to hear him do it, if he did it well? From officiating in our places of public worſhip no men of ſenſe, and of good moral characters, are excluded by any forms of conſecration. We are ready to accept of the ſervices of any perſon by whoſe diſcourſes we can hope to be edified. Would all chriſtians act upon this generous principle, and be ready to meet on every piece of ground that was common to them, true catholiciſm would be greatly promoted, prejudices would

would much ſooner die away, and truth, which we are all equally intereſted in diſcovering, would have a much better opportunity of prevailing over error than it now has.

To the Rev. Mr. Berington.

DEAR SIR,

It is with peculiar ſatisfaction that I communicate to you the very hearty and unanimous requeſt of the ſubſcribers to our Sunday ſchool, to give us a ſermon at the New Meeting, on any Sunday that ſhall be moſt convenient to yourſelf, within about a month from this time, when a collection will be made for the purpoſe, in aid of our ſubſcription. We have all been charmed with your excellent and liberal tract on the ſubject, and we wiſh to ſhow the world that, different as our perſuaſions are, we can meet together on the common principles of chriſtianity and benevolence.

With very great reſpect, I am,
Dear Sir,
Yours ſincerely,
J. PRIESTLEY.

Birmingham,
Oct. 28, 1799.

Mr.

Mr. Berington's Anſwer.

DEAR SIR,

The requeſt of the ſubſcribers to your Sunday ſchool, which you have communicated to me, has given me great pleaſure, though it has excited my ſurpriſe. It ſeems to indicate the dawn of better days, when difference in ſpeculative belief ſhall no longer divide the hearts of chriſtians. The novelty only of the propoſal ſurpriſed me. Nor can I ſufficiently admire the liberality of ſentiment manifeſted by the ſubſcribers on the occaſion, a liberality which at all times I ſhould be moſt happy to imitate, and to enforce. But I cannot comply with their requeſt. It would give offence, I fear, to the ſociety of which I am a member (ſo unprecedented is the meaſure) and willingly I would not ſhock even the prejudices of others, unleſs by that ſhock I might reaſonably hope to ſurmount them. The temper of the times likewiſe muſt be weighed, leſt by precipitance we rather check, than encourage, that happy tendency to benevolent and generous ſentiments which rapidly advances among thoſe of my perſuaſion, and which you, and other friends to the beſt intereſts of men, are effectually labouring to eſtabliſh in a wider ſphere.

I beg,

I beg, Sir, you will convey my apology to the ſubſcribers in the moſt grateful terms. They may know that I truly value the opinion they entertain of me, and that though, from prudential motives, I cannot comply with the letter of their requeſt, it ſhall be my endeavour to ſerve the great cauſe they patronize by every means in my power. We differ, it is true, in points to which men, I think, have given an undue weight; but the common principles of Chriſtianity and benevolence, as you expreſs it, muſt ever remain, I truſt, equally dear to us all.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours moſt ſincerely,

Oſcot,
Oct. 20, 1790. J. BERINGTON.

THE ſubſcribers to the Sunday-ſchool being convened to receive this anſwer, we could only lament that any reaſons of prudence ſhould be an obſtacle to Mr. Berington's compliance with our requeſt, and even defer our exhibiting to the world an example of that liberality in which Chriſtians are ſo much deficient, and which we wiſhed to take this opportunity of recommending.

No. II.

An Addreſs to the Jews, prefixed to the ſame Diſcourſe.*

Worſhippers of the One True God,

UNDER this noble appellation, unhappily not as yet applicable to the great body of Chriſtians, it is with peculiar ſatisfaction that I addreſs you; having in this reſpect the honour to rank with you. But do not be offended that the generality of Chriſtians ſhould have been drawn aſide into idolatry, worſhipping a creature inſtead of the creator, when your own anceſtors, notwithſtanding the manifeſt tokens of divine power accompanying them, and though he ſtood in a peculiar relation to them, and ſhewed them diſtinguiſhed favour, were for many ages drawn aſide in a ſimilar manner, worſhipping the ſun, the moon, and the hoſt of heaven, inſtead of the great Being who made them. Time and diſci-

* An amicable conference with ſome Jews who heard this diſcourſe was the occaſion of this addreſs to them. A freer intercourſe with Jews and Chriſtians would have a good effect on both.

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pline brought you to a juſt ſenſe of your duty, and things are evidently taking the ſame courſe with Chriſtians.

The time is happily come when the eyes of great numbers are opened to ſee their errors; and being enlightened themſelves, they are zealous to give their light to their brethren.

We are now well ſatisfied that Jeſus Chriſt, though a true prophet of God, is no more an object of divine worſhip than Moſes, or any other prophet. He was himſelf, as one of your nation, a humble worſhipper of the God of your fathers, and he inſtructed his followers to worſhip no other than him. Theſe Chriſtians are called *unitarians*, in oppoſition to the *trinitarians*, who pay divine honours to two other perſons beſides *the one God and Father of all*; and you cannot have been ſo inattentive to the preſent ſtate of things among Chriſtians, as not to perceive that the unitarian doctrine is very rapidly gaining ground. The belief of the *divine unity*, and alſo that of the proper *humanity of Chriſt*, are not now the private opinions of a few perſons only, which ſome time ago they were almoſt afraid to avow, but they are publicly profeſſed by great numbers, the moſt reſpectable for their ability, their learning, and their piety, among Chriſtians. They are alſo not confined to one nation, but

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are to be found in almoſt every part of the Chriſtian world. Nor are you to judge of the number of unitarians from thoſe who openly profeſs themſelves to be ſo. They now abound in all churches profeſſedly trinitarian, though, from timidity, or ſome other motive, which I do not undertake to defend, they do not make a public avowal of their ſentiments. By this means, however, things are ripening apace for a general declaration in favour of unitarianiſm whenever circumſtances ſhall be favourable to it.

I was much ſurpriſed, but far from being diſpleaſed, at one inſtance of your extreme ſcrupuloſity on this ſubject. Many of you, when you heard me deliver the following diſcourſe in Eſſex Chapel, were, I find, much offended at my calling Chriſt *Lord*, thinking it to be an appellation too nearly approaching to thoſe which in the ſcriptures are appropriated to God. We cannot well be too cautious how we aſcribe to any creature, though the moſt diſtinguiſhed prophet, thoſe titles which are more uſually given to the ſupreme Being. But be aſſured that I had no ſuch meaning, or intention; nor would any Engliſhman ſo underſtand me. By the term *Lord* we ſimply mean *maſter*, which all Chriſtians acknowledge Chriſt to be, ſince God has appointed him to be our teacher and inſtructor, and we therefore

therefore call ourselves by his name. Be assured also that I would never make use of the term again, if I thought that, after reflecting on the subject, it would give you the least offence.

Agreeing with you in this fundamental principle of all religion, particularly intrusted, as it were, to the guardianship of your nation, when you were set apart from the rest of the world, you will naturally look upon us with less aversion than you have hitherto justly done Christians in general; and I hope you will be induced to give a more patient and candid attention to what we have to propose in favour of the divine mission of Christ, and compare our arguments with those which you are able to produce in proof of the divine mission of Moses, and that of your other prophets.

I have already addressed you twice at large upon this important subject; and writing, as you are satisfied, from a principle of the purest goodwill to your nation, I am happy to find, that my *Letters* have not displeased you. Happy indeed, should I think myself to be, in any measure, the instrument in the hand of Divine Providence of opening the eyes of any of you to your true interest, and thereby of restoring you to the favour of God, and to that future glorious state

which is deſtined for you. This great event, however, God will bring about in his own time, in his own way, and by whatever inſtruments he pleaſes. And I hope the time is approaching, when, as the prophet Zechariah (chap. xii. 10.) has foretold, "he will pour upon you the ſpirit "of grace and of ſupplication, and when you "ſhall look upon him whom you have pierced, "and ſhall mourn for him as for an only ſon," as ſenſible of the wickedneſs of your anceſtors in rejecting and crucifying Jeſus, avowing yourſelves his diſciples.

Having before requeſted your attention to the evidences of Chriſtianity in general, let me now ſolicit it to that of the reſurrection of Jeſus in particular, as the moſt important fact in the goſpel hiſtory. Examine the evidence which I here lay before you, as you would that of any other hiſtorical facts, ſuch as thoſe which prove the divine miſſion of Moſes, and conſider whether it be not equally clear and ſatisfactory. And if Jeſus, after declaring that he came from God, and after reſting the proof of his divine miſſion, in a more eſpecial manner, on his own reſurrection from the dead, did actually riſe from the dead, to the complete ſatisfaction of a ſufficient number of the moſt competent witneſſes, you muſt acknowledge that he was no impoſtor, and

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that whatever he declared as from God may be depended upon, as much as that which Moſes delivered in his name.

Do not content yourſelves, as I perceive you are apt to do, with an admiration of your laws, as delivered down to you from your forefathers, and with your obligation, as their deſcendants, to obſerve them; but carefully review the *hiſtory* of your anceſtors, and of your laws, and conſider the *reaſons* they had to believe that they came from God. Your ſacred books tell you, and I doubt not they tell you truly, that your fathers themſelves, beſides ſeeing the miracles of Moſes, paſſed through the Red ſea, which was divided in a miraculous manner for them, and then heard the ten commandments delivered in an audible voice from Mount Sinai. But do you conſider the *authority* of thoſe books, and the reaſons why you receive them as authentic hiſtories of paſt events, and then compare this evidence with that which Chriſtians allege for the authority of the books of the New Teſtament. And if the facts there recorded be true, if Jeſus was declared to be the ſon of God by an audible voice from heaven; if, like Moſes, he wrought real miracles, or did ſuch things as no man could have done if God had not been with him; if after being put to death in the moſt public man-

ner, God raiſed him from the dead, and, in the ſight of numbers of his followers, took him up into heaven, his divine miſſion can no more be queſtioned than that of Moſes.

Believing this, you ought to declare yourſelves Chriſtians, though without ceaſing to be Jews, or diſcontinuing any of the obſervances of your own law, which Chriſt came not to deſtroy, but to fulfil, and to confirm; having ſolemnly declared (Mat. v. 18.) that "till heaven and "earth paſs away, one jot or one tittle ſhall in "no wiſe paſs from the law, till all be ful-"filled."

If Jeſus was a true prophet, he muſt likewiſe be *the Meſſiah*, whom Daniel expreſsly ſays was to be *cut off*, though under a prince of the houſe of David, (whom, if you pleaſe, you may call another *Meſſiah*, or a perſon *anointed* of God for a great purpoſe reſpecting your nation) you will be reſtored to your own country, and become the moſt diſtinguiſhed people upon earth.

What then can be your great objection to receiving one more prophet of your own nation than you have hitherto done, and conſequently complying with all his injunctions, one of which is to be baptized, in token of your new profeſſion, and another to celebrate the Lord's ſupper, as you do the paſſover.

Do

Do not wonder that God ſhould require thus much of you by Chriſt, when he required ſo much more by Moſes, though he made no ſuch addition to your obſervances by any of the intermediate prophets. Chriſt was the moſt diſtinguiſhed prophet that your nation ever produced; as by him God revealed to mankind in a more ſatisfactory manner than, as far as appears, he had ever done before, the great doctrine of a reſurrection to a future immortal life: and as by his means the Gentile world was brought to the knowledge and worſhip of the God of your fathers, ſo as to make a new diſpenſation, and a moſt diſtinguiſhed æra in the religious hiſtory of the world. This great object you ſee is in a great meaſure effected, and it would have been completely ſo long ago, if the corruptions of Chriſtianity, and eſpecially the introduction of the idolatrous worſhip of Jeſus Chriſt, and other human beings, had not put a ſtop to it. But when this great abomination ſhall be removed, as there can be no doubt that it ſoon will be, Chriſtianity will reſume its priſtine vigour, and enlighten and bleſs the whole world; when you will be no longer able to charge Chriſtians with *idolatry*, but, as your prophets ſay, when *God will be one, and his name one.*

I am happy to find that you think it a conſiderable advantage to you that ſo great a part of the world is Chriſtian, rather than Heathen, and that you live among people who reſpect your ſcriptures as much as you do yourſelves. This advantage you would not have had among the Mahometans, who, though they allow the inſpiration of your prophets, as well as that of Jeſus Chriſt, think that all former revelations were ſuperſeded by their prophet Mahomet; ſo that they make no uſe of your ſcriptures, or ours, but treat theſe ſacred books with great contempt. In time, I doubt not, you will find yourſelves ſtill more indebted to Chriſtians than you have hitherto been, and that the unſpeakable obligations we are under to you will be repaid by our ſervices, in your converſion to Chriſtianity. We owe you much indeed, but we live in the hope of diſcharging the debt. In the mean time we muſt content ourſelves with ſhewing our gratitude and good-will; reflecting on the important articles in which we agree with you, and which we derived from you.

The great object of our worſhip, and all the great articles of our faith, will then be the ſame. We agree in the belief of one God, the God of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, and that this God is gracious and merciful to all the truly penitent,

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as no doubt he will be to you, when you ſhall turn to him with your whole hearts. "Believe "in the Lord your God, ſo ſhall you be eſtab- "liſhed, believe his prophets, ſo ſhall you proſ- "per." 2 Chron. xx. 20. Moſes, ſpeaking of your preſent calamitous ſtate, diſperſed among all the nations of the world, ſays, Deut. iv. 29. "But if from thence thou ſhalt ſeek the Lord "thy God, thou ſhalt find him, if thou ſeek "him with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul. "When thou art in tribulation, and all theſe "things" (viz. the curſes he had mentioned) "are come upon thee, even in the latter days, "if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and be obe- "dient to his voice (for the Lord thy God is a "merciful God) he will not forſake thee, neither "deſtroy thee, neither forget the covenant of thy "fathers, which he ſware unto thee."

This God of your fathers ſeems now to be preparing the way, in the courſe of his unſearchable providence, for your reſtoration to his favour, and to your own country. Let nothing be wanting on your part to render yourſelves the proper objects of ſuch great favour. Of all nations you alone have been diſtinguiſhed by a particular providence, ſo that your outward proſperity has ever kept pace with your faith and obe-

dience; and this I doubt not will be the caſe to the end of time.

All your perſecutions have ariſen fron *trinitarian*, i. e. *idolatrous* Chriſtians, but all *unitarians* will naturally love and reſpect you, acknowledging their unſpeakable obligations to you, as the antient depoſitories of the great article of their faith. As one of them, and ſecond to none in love and reſpect for you, I entreat your attention to this diſcourſe; and with my earneſt prayers for your happineſs, temporal and eternal, I ſubſcribe myſelf, as before,

Your brother in the ſole worſhip of
the one living and true God,

Birmingham,
May 20, 1791. J. PRIESTLEY.

No. III.

The Preface to the Diſcourſe containing a View of Revealed Religion.

THOUGH publications of the nature of *this* have ſeldom any extenſive circulation, yet as ſome perſons into whoſe hands it may fall, may want information

formation concerning the idea of *ordination* that prevails among Diſſenters, I ſhall obſerve that we (at leaſt many of us) do not now mean by it the *giving of orders*, without which a perſon could not be conſidered as properly qualified to exerciſe the office of miniſter in a Chriſtian ſociety. As all our ſocieties are independent of each other, the members of each of them are, of courſe, the ſole judges of the qualifications of the perſon whom they chuſe to be their miniſter. Conſequently their appointment is his proper *orders*, or *title to officiate* among them; and all that is done by the miniſters who bear any part in what is uſually called *the ordination ſervice* (beſides thereby virtually expreſſing their approbation of the choice of the congregation, and giving their miniſter the right hand of fellowſhip) is to recommend him and his labours to the divine bleſſing by prayer, and to give him and the people proper advice.

On this idea it is now cuſtomary with many Diſſenters, eſpecially thoſe who are called Preſbyterians, for the miniſter to diſcharge all the functions of his office, baptizing and adminiſtering the Lord's ſupper, as well as preaching and praying, before ordination, in order more effectually to remove the prejudices which ſtill remain with many, founded on the idea that ſome powers are conferred on this occaſion, powers which qualify him

him to do *after* this ceremony what he could not do *before*.

The proper *ordination ſervice*, therefore, conſiſts in the *prayer over the candidate*, and the *charge*. But the congregation, and alſo many ſtrangers, being uſually aſſembled on the occaſion, and eſpecially a number of miniſters being preſent, it has been uſual for one of them to deliver a diſcourſe, or *ſermon*, on ſome ſubject relating to Chriſtianity in general, or the miniſtry of it in particular; and inſtead of the particular *confeſſion of faith*, which was formerly required of all candidates for the miniſtry (his ſoundneſs in which was then deemed eſſential) certain *queſtions* are put to him, which lead him to give as much as he thinks proper of his views of Chriſtianity and the miniſtry of it, and the motives and maxims of his own conduct, for the inſtruction of the audience.

The ceremony of *impoſition of hands*, which in primitive times accompanied the action of praying for a particular perſon, by which the apoſtles communicated ſpiritual gifts, and which was afterwards ſuppoſed to be neceſſary to the conferring of proper qualifications for the goſpel miniſtry, is now generally laid aſide by us, ſince we are conſcious that we have nothing to impart, and wiſh not to encourage ſuperſtition.

Ordination

Ordination being now no longer conſidered in the light of *conferring orders*, as in Epiſcopal, and the proper Preſbyterian churches, many of the more liberal Diſſenters neglect it altogether; thinking it to encourage ſuperſtition, and to keep up a mere *form* when the *ſubſtance* is wanting. But when the deſign of ordination, as above explained, is well underſtood, when the perſon ordained ſhall have performed every part of the miniſterial duty before, as well as after, his ordination, though the name given to the ſervice no longer ſuggeſts the idea that was formerly annexed to it, no ſuperſtition is encouraged. And ſince the connexion between a miniſter and his congregation, and eſpecially the firſt that he forms, is a very ſerious concern, there cannot, ſurely, be any impropriety, but on the contrary the greateſt propriety, in making it an occaſion of ſolemn prayer; and then exhortation or admonition, from a miniſter of greater age and experience, to one who has but lately entered upon the office, is particularly ſeaſonable. I cannot help, therefore, expreſſing my wiſh, that ſome ſervice, to which the name of *ordination* may well enough be given, may be kept up among us, at the ſame time that every precaution is taken to prevent ſuperſtition with reſpect to it.

Birmingham,
Nov. 1, 1790.

J. PRIESTLEY.

No.

No. IV.

The Correſpondence with Mr. Gibbon.

Dr. Prieſtley's Card to Mr. Gibbon.

DR. PRIESTLEY preſents his compliments to Mr. Gibbon, begs his acceptance of a copy of his Hiſtory of the Corruptions of Chriſtianity, and requeſts his particular attention to the *General Concluſion*, Part I.

Birmingham,
Dec. 11, 1782.

Mr. Gibbon's Firſt Letter.

SIR,

As a mark of your *eſteem*, I ſhould have accepted with pleaſure your *Hiſtory of the Corruptions of Chriſtianity*. You have been careful to inform me that it is intended not as a gift, but as a *challenge*; and ſuch a challenge you muſt permit me to decline. At the ſame time, ſince you glory in outſtripping the zeal of the Mufti and the Lama, it may be proper for me to declare, that I ſhould equally refuſe the defiance of thoſe venerable Divines. Once, and once only, the juſt

defence

defence of my own veracity provoked me to deſcend into the amphitheatre; but as long as you attack opinions which I have never maintained, and maintain principles which I have never denied, you may ſafely exult in my ſilence, and your own victory. The difference between us (on the credibility of miracles) which you chuſe to ſuppoſe, and wiſh to argue, is a trite and antient topic of controverſy; and from the opinion which you entertain of yourſelf, and of me, it does not appear probable, that our diſpute would either edify, or enlighten the public.

That public will decide to whom the invidious name of *unbeliever* more juſtly belongs: to the hiſtorian, who, without interpoſing his own ſentiments, has delivered a ſimple narrative of authentic facts, or to the diſputant, who proudly rejects all natural proof of the immortality of the ſoul, overthrows (by circumſcribing) the inſpiration of the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles, and condemns the religion of every Chriſtian nation as a fable leſs innocent, but no leſs abſurd, than Mahomet's journey to the third Heavens.

And now, Sir, ſince you aſſume a right to determine the objects of my paſt and future ſtudies, give me leave to convey to your ear the almoſt unanimous, and not offenſive, wiſh of the philoſophic world: that you would confine your talents

lents and induſtry to thoſe ſciences in which real and uſeful improvements *can* be made. Remember the end of your predeceſſor Servetus, not of his life (the Calvins of our days are reſtrained from the uſe of the ſame fiery arguments) but I mean the end of his reputation. His theological writings are loſt in oblivion; and if his book on the trinity be ſtill preſerved, it is only becauſe it contains the firſt rudiments of the diſcovery of the circulation of the blood.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient humble Servant,

E. GIBBON.

The Anſwer.

SIR,

It would have been impertinent in me, eſpecially conſidering the object of my Hiſtory, to have ſent you a copy of it as a mark of my *eſteem*, or friendſhip. What I meant was to act the part of a fair and open adverſary; and I am truly ſorry that you decline the diſcuſſion I propoſed. For though you are of a different opinion, I do not think that either of us could be better employed; and ſhould the Mufti and the Lama (whoſe challenge you ſay you would alſo decline) become parties in the buſineſs, I ſhould rejoice the more.

I do

I do not well know what you can mean by intimating that I am "a greater unbeliever than your-"ſelf; that I attack opinions which you never "maintained, and maintain principles which you "never denied." If you mean to aſſert that you are a believer in Chriſtianity, and meant to recommend it, I muſt ſay that your mode of writing has been very ill adapted to gain your purpoſe. If there be any certain method of diſcovering a man's real object, yours has been to diſcredit Chriſtianity in fact, while, in words you repreſent yourſelf as a friend to it; a conduct which I ſcruple not to call highly unworthy and mean, an inſult on the common ſenſe of the Chriſtian world. As a method of ſcreening you from the notice of the law (which is as hoſtile to me as it is to you) you muſt know that it could avail you nothing; and though that mode of writing might be deemed ingenious and witty, in the firſt inventer of it, it has been too often repeated to deſerve that appellation now.

According to your own rule of conduct, *this* charge ought to provoke you to deſcend into the amphitheatre once more, as much as the accuſation of Mr. Davis. For it is a call upon you to defend not your *principles* only, but alſo your *honour*. For what can reflect greater diſhonour upon a man, than to ſay one thing and mean

another? You have certainly been very far from confining yourſelf, as you pretend, to *a ſimple narrative of authentic facts*, without interpoſing your own ſentiments. I hold no opinions, obnoxious as they are, that I am not ready both to avow, in the moſt explicit manner, and alſo to defend, with any perſon of competent judgment and ability. Had I not conſidered you in this light, and alſo as fairly open, by the ſtrain of your writings, to ſuch a challenge, I ſhould not have called upon you as I have done. The public will form its own judgment both of that, and of your ſilence, and finally decide between you, the humble hiſtorian, and me, the proud diſputant.

As to my *reputation*, for which you are very obligingly concerned, give me leave to obſerve, that as far as it is an object with any perſon, and a thing to be enjoyed by himſelf, it muſt depend upon his particular notions and feelings. Now, odd as it may appear to you, the eſteem of a very few rational Chriſtian friends (though I know that it will enſure me the deteſtation of the greater part of the nominally Chriſtian world that may happen to hear of me) gives me more real ſatisfaction than the applauſe of what you call the philoſophic world. I admire Servetus (by whoſe example you wiſh me to take warning) more for his courage in dying for the cauſe of

important

important truth, than I ſhould have done if, beſides the certain diſcovery of the circulation of the blood, he had made any other, the moſt celebrated diſcovery in philoſophy.

However, I do not ſee what my philoſophical friends (of whom I have many, and whom I think I value as I ought) have to do with my metaphyſical or theological writings. They may, if they pleaſe, conſider them as my particular whims or amuſement, and accordingly neglect them. They have, in fact, interfered very little with my application to philoſophy, ſince I have had the means of doing it. I was never more buſy, or more ſucceſsfully ſo, in my philoſophical purſuits, than during the time that I have been employed about the *Hiſtory of the Corruptions of Chriſtianity*. I am at this very time *totus in illis*, as my friends know, and as the public will know in due time, which with me is never long; and if you had thought proper to enter into the diſcuſſion I propoſed, it would not have made me neglect my laboratory, or omit a ſingle experiment that I ſhould otherwiſe have made.

I am, Sir,

Your very humble ſervant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

Mr. Gibbon's Second Letter.

SIR,

As I do not preſume to judge of the ſentiments and intentions of another, I ſhall not enquire how

far you are diſpoſed to ſuffer, or to inflict, martyrdom. It only becomes me to ſay, that the ſtyle and temper of your laſt letter has ſatisfied me of the propriety of declining all farther correſpondence, whether public or private, with ſuch an adverſary.

I am, Sir,

Your humble ſervant,

E. GIBBON.

The Anſwer.

SIR,

I neither requeſted, nor wiſhed, to have any private correſpondence with you. All that my MS. card required was a ſimple acknowledgment of the receipt of the copy of my work. You choſe, however, to give me a ſpecimen of your temper and feelings, and alſo what I thought to be an opening to a farther call upon you for a juſtification of yourſelf in public. Of this I was willing to take advantage, and at the ſame time to ſatisfy you that my philoſophical purſuits, for which, whether in earneſt or not, you were pleaſed to expreſs ſome concern, would not be interrupted in conſequence of it. As this correſpondence, from the origin and nature of it, cannot be deemed confidential, I may (eſpecially if I reſume my obſervations on your conduct as an hiſtorian) give the public an opportunity of judging of the propriety of my

anſwer

anſwer to your firſt extraordinary letter, and alſo to this laſt truly enigmatical one; to interpret which requires much more ſagacity, than to diſcover your real intentions with reſpect to Chriſtianity, though you might think you had carefully concealed them from all human inſpection.

Wiſhing to hear from you juſt as little as you pleaſe in private, and juſt as much as you pleaſe in public,

I am, Sir,

Your humble ſervant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

Mr. Gibbon's Third Letter.

If Dr. Prieſtley conſults his friends, he will probably learn, that a ſingle copy of a paper, addreſſed under a ſeal, to a ſingle perſon, and not relative to any public or official buſineſs, muſt always be conſidered as *private correſpondence*, which a man of honour is not at liberty to print, without the conſent of the writer. That conſent, in the preſent inſtance, Mr. Gibbon thinks proper to withhold: and as he deſires to eſcape all farther altercation, he ſhall not trouble Dr. Prieſtley, or himſelf, with explaining the motives of his refuſal.

The Anſwer.

Dr. Prieſtley is as unwilling to be guilty of any real *impropriety* as Mr. Gibbon can wiſh him

to be; but as the correſpondence between them relates not to any *private*, but only to a *public* matter, he apprehends that it may, according to Mr. Gibbon's own diſtinction, at the pleaſure of either of the parties, be laid before the public, who, in fact, are intereſted to know, at leaſt, the reſult of it. Dr. Prieſtley's conduct will always be open to animadverſion, that of Mr. Gibbon, or any other perſon. His appeal is to men of honour, and even men of the world, and he deſires no favour.

Dr. Prieſtley has ſent a ſingle copy of the correſpondence to a friend in London, with leave to ſhew it to any other common friend, but with prohibition to take any other copy. But between this and printing there is no difference, except in mode and extent. In the eye of the law, and of reaſon, both are equally *publications*; and has Mr. Gibbon never thought himſelf at liberty to ſhew a copy of a letter to a third perſon?

Mr. Gibbon may eaſily "eſcape all farther "altercation" by diſcontinuing this mutually diſagreeable correſpondence, and leaving Dr. Prieſtley to act as his own diſcretion, or indiſcretion, may dictate; and for this himſelf only, and not Mr. Gibbon, is reſponſible.

FINIS.

